

Lamp, Sebastian (2018) Korean Sijo music and poetry: transmission and aesthetics. PhD thesis. SOAS University of London. <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/30276>

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# **Korean Sijo Music and Poetry: Transmission and Aesthetics**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD  
2017

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## Abstract

This thesis explores Korean *sijo*, as both poetry and music. It surveys the different bodies of research on the topic that are the result of *sijo* long being treated from one or other of the perspectives of literary and musicological scholarship by both Western (e.g. Rutt 1971, McCann 1988, O'Rourke 2002) and Korean scholars (e.g. Chang Sa-hun 1986, Kim Tae-Haeng 1986, Cho Kyu-Ick 1994).

Placing both literary and musicological aspects together, this thesis discusses the form, origins and content of *sijo*. The synthesis of the two aspects forms the basis of my exploration of *sijo* performance during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My focus is on the transmission of *chŏngga* – *sijo*, along with *kagŏk* and *kasa*, that together form Korea's classical vocal music tradition – during the turbulent times from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the colonial period to the post-liberation era. The important actors, that is, the singers, scholars and relevant institutions – governmental and private – have been discussed at least partially in various publications (e.g. Hahn Man-young 1990, Yi Pohyŏng 2004, Song Bang-Song 2007, Kim Minjŏng 2015, Moon Hyun 2015), but this thesis provides the first thorough account of *chŏngga* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its teaching genealogies, institutions, aspects of its preservation, and its regional variants.

This thesis demonstrates that the subtle aesthetic of *chŏngga* literati music lies at the heart of what constitutes *sijo* as a genre; reference to Confucian and sometimes Daoist influence on the aesthetic of literati music is frequent, but the nature of such influence has not been adequately discussed. I survey academic writings by Korean and Western scholars (e.g. Donna Kwon 1995, Lee Byong Won 1997, Byung-ki Hwang 2001) to address terminology and concepts relevant in the context of *chŏngga* and then, based on my personal fieldwork, and in order to provide a comprehensive account of *chŏngga* aesthetics, I complement previous writing by incorporating the views of contemporary *chŏngga* singers.

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## Introduction

This thesis consists of three distinct but related parts which explore the topic of pre-modern and contemporary Korean *sijo*, as both poetry and music. It aims to provide a comprehensive account that brings together the different bodies of research on the topic which are the result of *sijo* long being treated from one or the other of the perspectives of literary or musicological scholarship by both Western and Korean scholars. For this purpose, I have surveyed the various accounts and theories of *sijo*'s form and origin, and offer a synthesis; although not every aspect of *sijo* research can be meaningfully discussed by adopting this parallel view, research on either literary or musicological sides benefits from knowledge of *sijo*'s other side. Part II onwards then for the most part explores *sijo* as a musical genre. I use the synthesis of approaches as the basis for my exploration of *sijo* performance during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I then demonstrate that the intricate aesthetic of vocal production in Korean *chŏngak* literati music lies at the heart of what constitutes *sijo* as a genre. While research on this is scarce in English, discussions by Korean scholars draw on conceptual and terminological conventions that are not easily accessible to Western scholars. It is a commonplace that literati music was shaped by Confucianism, although the exact way in which Confucian ideas left an imprint on the music is rarely discussed. The topic I have tried to address in my account of aesthetics is designed to be understandable to a Western audience; ultimately, I hope for the whole of my work to be of interest to both musicologists and literature scholars in the field of Korean studies.

Since much of my discussion hinges on the route to modernity that began at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a brief statement about that period is in order. That period was to radically change almost every aspect of life in Korea and for Koreans. Shifting geopolitical configurations towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about a severe identity crisis for Korean elites and intellectuals, which had at its centre the question of whether Korea could hold on to traditional



ways and the vision of a Confucian state. The Japanese annexation, and the gradual development of Japanese influence at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that preceded it, constituted a rude awakening to the impossibility of continuing with old ideas and practices, and consequently triggered an entirely different identity crisis about Korea's place in the world in the post-colonial era, when no longer a tributary of China, the ancient centre of the East Asian world, it would become a nation-state of its own. Japanese colonial rule and the vision of modernity that it enforced upon Korea can be seen to have limited and suppressed a wide range of expressions of Korean culture. This is especially significant since traditional Korean music experienced what may be termed a “cultural bottleneck” during the colonial period, during and after which the transmission of many forms relied on a small number of people – much the same holds true for the sung *sijo* practised in today's traditional music schools and university departments.

I was drawn to Korean literati traditions from the beginning of my serious engagement with Korean music. Within the literati traditions, it was the vocal genres – *kagok*, *kasa* and *sijo*, together *chōngga* – which interested me most; on one hand it seemed fascinating that the most universal musical instrument, the human voice, could be utilized in such a different way, and on the other it seemed that, unlike in the more abstract instrumental traditions, the texts in these vocal genres could provide a lens through which to view the music.

This thesis, then, started out as a quest for answers to the various questions that were on my mind about *sijo*; my questions may well resemble those that other researchers interested in Korean music or poetry have. After writing my master's thesis on the musically-related genre of the *sibi* (12) *kasa* and trying out an approach of looking at music and text as two sides of the same coin, I was drawn to the peculiarities that I saw in *sijo*, based on everything I knew by then: One melody, but close to 5,000 texts, a musical form that was said to be simple but which existed in a great deal of variants of form and regional style, a genre that was practised by professionals and amateurs alike.

I found many answers to the questions I had about *chŏngga* when I first read Park Sung-Hee's 2010 PhD thesis, *Patronage and creativity in Seoul: the late 18th to late 19th century urban middle class and its vocal music*. This is, so far, the most useful English-language account of *chŏngga*, and, written in Britain by a Korean researcher with a Korean university background, constitutes an insightful synthesis of Eastern and Western academic approaches. It allowed me a starting point, and to go beyond its scope in depth and topic. It also allowed me to omit discussion of topics which arguably should have been included in the first part of this thesis in order to give a more complete picture of *sijo*; the reader is encouraged to consult Park's work, particularly with regard to the social environment of *chŏngga* in the late Chosŏn dynasty, but also more general topics related to *chŏngga*, such as Korean notation systems and notation books.

My thesis is located at the intersection of Korean literature studies, historical musicology, Korean musicological scholarship and ethnomusicology. I have grappled with the undoubted problem of how to classify Korean indigenous scholarship on Korean music. There is ample evidence that Korean musicologists reject that their endeavours be called 'ethnomusicology' (cf. Suppan & Song Bang-Song 1985:141-2). This depends on how we want to define ethnomusicology; Howard suggests that "it may be the term 'ethnomusicology' that is wrong, rather than the varied but often shared activities of ethnomusicologists" (2002:22), and argues that the research that Korean musicology conducts can be accommodated within the diverse field of ethnomusicology, notwithstanding a number of differences in method that are typically applied.

## **Content overview**

This thesis is made up of three parts that correspond to three large thematic complexes that I briefly outline here, followed by detailed descriptions of the contents of each chapter. The focus on the panoptic view of literary and musical *sijo* comes into play especially in the first two chapters of my thesis as I discuss form and origin for 'both' *sijo* and present the results of my

investigation in tandem. These two elements cannot be integrated as easily with regard to the topic of aesthetics, so the content of the literary form is discussed in Chapter 3 but I have elected to dedicate a complete later section, Part III, to musical aesthetics.

In terms of topic, the layout of my thesis goes from the general to the more specific. Part I with its three chapters is the foundation on which Part II and III stand. Part II and III abandon the two-pronged approach of Part I; Part II mostly adopts an historical perspective to discuss sung *sijo* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, presenting an account of *sijo*'s trajectory through institutions, its transmission, preservation and contemporary practice, as well as the issues surrounding these topics. Finally, Part III deals with aesthetics, an important topic to discuss particularly for a Western observer to whom *sijo*'s aesthetic can hardly be said to come naturally. I discuss musical aesthetics against a backdrop of traditional East Asian philosophy, identifying aesthetic concepts in writings and interviews and attempting to establish relevant connections.

In Part I, I survey, summarize and discuss various aspects of *sijo* based on academic literature by Western and Korean researchers from different periods, including sources from both literary and musicological scholarship. Part I, then, functions as a necessary comprehensive introduction to the topic of *sijo* and contains three chapters on fundamental aspects. The first chapter introduces the literary and musical forms of *sijo*, detailing both the historical background to them and the musically related category of *chŏngga*, providing a synthesis of research to date. My two main arguments are that most theories about *sijo*'s literary form propose descriptive models, based on observed abstractions, but fail to suggest a prescriptive model that the *sijo* writers could have had in mind, and that discussion of *sijo*'s literary form must necessarily be informed by knowledge of the musical form, not only of *sijo*, but also of *kagok*, a second, and likely older, performance mode for *sijo* texts. Chapter 2 explores the difficulties of investigating the origins of *sijo*, discussing historical sources, terminology and theories of *sijo*'s origin and its potential predecessors. Chapter 3 strays from the musical side of *sijo*, and in discussing the content of *sijo* provides a glimpse of the aesthetic of *sijo* texts – which has allowed them to stand on their own

as literary works. As I explore this, I discuss some of the problems of essentialisation, abstraction and representation in an attempt to bring a more anthropological perspective to the topic.

Part II breaks away from the broader perspective of Part I and focusses on *sijo* as a musical form and, by extension, the *chŏngga* practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I include aspects of *chŏngga*'s transmission, preservation and practice throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to present time. Chapter 4, subdivided in two parts, offers theoretical considerations around transmission, change and authenticity in the *chŏngga* tradition. My research addresses the concept of the *wŏnhyŏng*, a presumed primordial form of a musical piece, and questions the viability of such a concept by drawing on a comparison with discourses around authenticity and historical performance in Western classical music. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to a genealogy illustrating the links between singers involved in transmission since the late Chosŏn dynasty, divided into two strands along the lines of class and style, and taking the genealogies up to recent times. I will argue that the narrative is necessary, but the musical reality should and must be different. Chapter 5 looks at the same period but from a different perspective: I discuss not the people but the institutions related to *chŏngga*. Liberation from Japanese colonial rule is taken as an important turning point in the destiny of Korea and its affairs, including Korean music, so the first half of the chapter discusses three institutions or types of institutions before 1945: the Korean Court Music Study Institute, *kwŏnbŏn* training institutes for *kisaeng* female entertainers, and the *Yiwangjik aakpu* Court Music Bureau. Three more institutions or types of institutions active after 1945 are discussed in the second half of the chapter: the Gugak National Middle and High School, the National Gugak Center, and *kugak* departments in universities. All institutions are, where information is available, discussed in terms of their history, setup, methods of teaching and recruitment, activities and aesthetic outlook. Due to my thematic division between Chapters 4 and 5, they coincide in the time-period discussed, so I ask that they be read in parallel rather than consecutively. Chapter 6 breaks loose from the focus on transmission and institutions, and discusses modern *chŏngga* practise, with special consideration of the effects that the introduction

of Korea's system of intangible cultural properties in 1962 has had on *chōngga* practise. I also include a brief discussion of *sijo* styles protected as regional properties and I will argue that in *chōngga*'s case the benefits of preservation outweigh any negative effects.

Part III treats the aesthetics of *sijo* as a musical form. Chapter 7 briefly introduces the philosophical foundations of *chōngak* in Confucianism and Daoism, and their role in Chosŏn-era Korean aesthetic thought, then proceeds to discuss aesthetic concepts which academic writings apply to, or identify, in Korean music in general, and *chōngga* and *sijo* in particular. Chapter 8 draws on my personal fieldwork and presents interviews with contemporary Korean *chōngga* singers on the topic of their own conceptions of aesthetics in *chōngga*. Although I was interested in a number of aspects on *sijo*, asking each singer slightly different questions according to their background, I was particularly interested in the singers' ideas about the aesthetics of *chōngga* in general, and *sijo* in particular.

### **Research questions**

Given the ethnographic character of the ethnomusicological project, the thesis as a whole is guided by the overarching research question of what the most important things to know about *sijo* are. As a whole, however, the thesis does not try to argue one specific point, but rather explores this fundamental question through examining the various related aspects, in order that a clearer picture of *sijo* can emerge as a result. The individual chapters, meanwhile, try to answer fairly specific questions about *sijo*-related aspects which can be outlined as follows:

1. What models have been suggested to account for *sijo*'s literary and musical forms, and what are their respective merits?
2. What are the circumstances that complicate our assessment of *sijo*'s origin, as concerns both the availability of sources and the biases that scholars have exhibited in answering this question? What have the criteria advanced in judging possible predecessors of *sijo* been, and what are the merits of individual theories?

3. How have previous commentators conceptualized the aesthetic of *sijo* texts and what fallacies must we avoid when we try to decide what is essential about *sijo* texts from a modern perspective of literary criticism?
4. Can the official narrative of a single origin of all recent *chŏngga* practice be upheld?
5. In what ways did institutions and performers shape *sijo* and *chŏngga* practice? How did today's common-sense ideas about these genres take hold? How does contemporary practice compare to earlier forms of transmission and practice? What effect has the National Gugak Center's patronage, and the trajectory of *chŏngga* into the realm of academia had?
6. How do the effects of the preservation system on *chŏngga* compare to the effects wrought on other genres of Korean music?
7. Given commentators' frequent references to *chŏngga*'s aesthetics as being Confucian, how precisely does Confucian influence play out in aesthetic concepts, and to what degree can aesthetic ideas be linked back to philosophical ideas?
8. Given the absence of an aesthetic discourse related to *chŏngga* during the Chosŏn dynasty, how do contemporary *chŏngga* specialists conceptualize aesthetics? Where is their aesthetic vocabulary derived from? How do their ideas compare to academic writings on the topic?

### **Literature review**

The PhD thesis by Park Sung-Hee mentioned above is the only book-length treatment of *chŏngga* in English, as well as the only source in which all three genres including *sijo* are treated by an ethnomusicologist. It was immensely useful as a source of information, particularly with regard to the historical context of *chŏngga* during Chosŏn dynasty, and Part II of my thesis picks up the thread where Park Sung-Hee's discussion ends in the late Chosŏn dynasty. Since Park's research focusses on *chŏngga*'s historical context, she introduces much background information on *chŏngga*,

but does not go into depth about the aspects of *sijo* that I focus on, with the exception of *chōngga*'s aesthetics, which she treats in some detail, and some of the testimonies and ideas in her research have been taken up and expanded upon. A challenge with many older publications on Korean music used to be that they were published as 'government-produced not-for-sale reference materials' and therefore sometimes hard to access. Lee Byong Won identifies this problem and comments that the situation has improved in recent years (2002:148), so fortunately two English-language publications by the National Gugak Center (Kim Hee-sun 2007, Um Hae-kyung 2007) were available to me which provided helpful overviews of the instrumental and vocal *chōngak* traditions. Although criticized for factual errors, an English-language monograph exists on *kagok* (Rockwell 1972), as well as an MA thesis specifically treating the aesthetics of *sijo* (Donna Kwon 1995), the first writing in English dedicated entirely to *sijo* as music. Kwon's writing approaches aesthetics from the perspective of musical analysis, providing an overview of vocal ornaments, yet these are hardly connected to extra-musical concepts.

In the study of *sijo*'s literary dimension by Western researchers, the writings of Richard Rutt (1970, 1998), Kevin O'Rourke (2002, 2004), and David McCann (1988, 1998, 2000) stand out. They are preceded, though, by a thorough but slightly outdated English-language introduction to Korean literature (1965) by Peter H. Lee, a Korean scholar who obtained his doctorate in Germany. While Rutt and O'Rourke approach *sijo* mainly from the standpoint of translation, McCann's treatment of *sijo* is more theory-minded, although he is a proven translator as well. Most of the anthologies containing *sijo* or various types of Korean poetry which I have been able to refer to are exclusively in English, except for Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986) and Lee Ki-Chin et al. (1986),<sup>1</sup> both of which offer translations together with the Korean originals. Chōng Pyōnguk's seminal *sijo* anthology (1966), containing almost 2400 poems, is the major reference work in Korean. Although some new *sijo* have been discovered since its publication, and updated

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<sup>1</sup> The proliferation of bilingual *sijo* anthologies in 1986 has to do with government policies that provided sponsorship, relating to the wish to introduce Korean traditional culture to visitors of the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul (this is the expressly stated purpose of Lee's volume).

anthologies exist, this work is still most widely cited and used to reference *sijo* texts among Korean scholars.

Considering that the contribution which the anthologies of *sijo* translations in English claim to make are their largely beautifully crafted translations, the amount of commentary and information to be found in them is remarkable. One of the first of these is by Richard Rutt (1998).<sup>2</sup> Rutt was an Anglican priest and latterly bishop who converted to Catholicism following a change that allowed women priests to practise in 1991. Due to his occupation, Rutt was arguably a *sijo* lover first, and a scholar only second. Rutt's scholarly credentials are, of course, substantial, but he repeatedly emphasized his pre-academic involvement with *sijo*: "My life lay outside academe. Rejoicing in the living tradition of *sijo* around me and always absorbed primarily by my pastoral work, I went on translating for sheer pleasure" (1998:xvi). In an interview with Grace Koh in 2008, he added the following:

Koh: You are a respected, erudite scholar and academic in your right; but working outside academia, profession-wise, how did you find publishing your translations and research? Did you find that in some ways it gave you a certain level of freedom?

Rutt: I was very much aware of that. My career doesn't depend on what I'm doing in my studies. Occasionally I met people who I felt their career was really hampering them from doing the best that they might have done... (Rutt 2008:138)

In this, there are parallels to the situation of Kevin O'Rourke, who is a Columban Catholic father and a professor emeritus of Seoul's Kyung Hee University. He was the first foreigner to obtain a PhD degree from a Korean university. His anthology has the benefit of relative recentness (2002) which has allowed him to include newer research that had been published after

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<sup>2</sup> While I used a re-issue from 1998, the first edition dates back to 1971. The title, *The Bamboo Grove: An Introduction to Sijo*, is a nod to Harold Henderson's famous haiku anthology *The Bamboo Broom: an introduction to Japanese haiku* (1933). During World War II, Rutt enrolled in the military intelligence department on Japan where he learned some Japanese.



Rutt's anthology, and he is one of the few Western literary scholars who meticulously absorbed and commented on Korean research.

Since the research presented in this thesis will make use of English translations of *sijo* poems for illustration, it is necessary to comment briefly on the various approaches that translators have chosen in conveying the *sijo* aesthetic to the reader. Rutt tries to approximate the syllable count of the original, which results in translations that appear well-balanced and faithful to the proportions of the original. O'Rourke, however, basing himself on the writings of Cho Kyu-Ick (1994), contends that the *sijo* texts included in his book, which in their majority pre-date the introduction of the sung *sijo* form, would have been sung to the *kagok* musical setting in the main. He therefore tries to approximate the form of *kagok* which divides into five sections. Accordingly, in the layout of O'Rourke's translations, the first two lines each roughly equal one breath group of the first section in Korean, the third line corresponds to the second section and the last two lines correspond to first syllable group of the third section, and the rest of the third section, respectively.<sup>3</sup> While both Rutt and O'Rourke provide good introductions to *sijo*, they do not dwell on discussions of *sijo* formal properties. Finally, the only book-length theoretical publication on Korean poetry forms in English was written by David R. McCann (1988). His theory on the *sijo* form proposes 'rhythmic groups' as the constituent principle. While this seems promising, it does not seem to have found wide application. The work of Rutt, O'Rourke, Kim Jaihiun Joyce and McCann has been central to my discussion of *sijo*'s content in Chapter 3, but the question that concerns me, of how we can achieve an even-handed aesthetic appraisal of *sijo*, is hardly posed in these writings.

Two of the leading Korean literature scholars on *sijo* are Chŏng Pyŏnguk and Kim Taehaeng. The former's oeuvre is formidable, and apart from his *sijo* anthology, I have used two parts from a relatively recent eight-volume series (1999) in my discussion of the *sijo* form. Kim Taehaeng's well-arranged monograph (1986) on *sijo* with its holistic and comprehensible treatment has been

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<sup>3</sup> This terminology is explained in Chapter 1.2.

one of the pillars to my discussion of sijo's form and origin. Cho Kyu-Ick's account (1994) is a notable treatment of sijo that fully acknowledges the genre's dimension as part of Korea's tradition of sung vernacular poetry. The literary form of sijo is also discussed in articles by Ch'oe Tongwŏn (1970), Kim Sangsŏn (1979), Kim Chin-Woo (1981) and Shin Woong-Soon (2015). Yet, all previous research on the sijo form has in common that no author discusses what a prescriptive model of sijo would entail, and, with the exception of recent research like Park Jaemin & Kim Jinhee (2017), literary and musical aspects are not brought together.

Next to Kim Taehaeng and Cho Kyu-Ick, my research on sijo's origins has benefited from publications by the musicologist Hwang JunYon (1998), and the Korean literature scholars Kwŏn Tuhwan (1993) and Shin Woong-Soon (2006). A challenge in working with older Korean musicological scholarship is to identify the relevant passages in longer works with often generic titles, which often include some combination of the words *kugak* ('national music' = Korean traditional music) and *non/-ron* (discussion/study). This is reminiscent of the early days of ethnomusicology when books bore titles like 'Chinese Music', suggesting that everything relevant about Chinese music could fit into one book. Such publications are often collections of loosely connected essays on diverse topics, but they contain much useful material springing from profound knowledge and deep familiarity with a wealth of Korean primary sources concerning music history. One such work discussing a range of genres and topics is by Hahn Man-young and has been translated by Keith Howard and Inok Paek (1990). A thorough outline of genres and concepts in Korean music that in its form comes close to being a basic encyclopaedia is by Hahn Man-young and Chang Sa-hun (1975), the latter of whom was of an eminence comparable to the 'founder' of Korean musicology, Lee Hye-ku (1908–2010), in establishing the body of research on Korean music, including sijo. Chang was the first to write extensively on sijo from a musical perspective (1986), but much of his pioneering work has since been refined and taken further by the following generations of musicologists.

Historical studies that concern the turn of the century and the Japanese colonial era offer perspectives on the environment and circumstances in which *sijo* were appropriated as national literature in what was to be the highly influential first wave of *sijo* criticism. Works that have proved useful for me are those edited by Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini (1998), as well as a meticulous study by Michael Edson Robinson (1988). The topic of Japanese cultural policy has been treated idiosyncratically but in a manner that many Koreans would balk at by Taylor E. Atkins (2010). Due to the circumstances of the colonial period, the system of intangible cultural properties from 1962 onwards, and the Korean preoccupation with teaching lineages, individual singers play an important role in the narrative of transmission and in discussions of the *chŏngga* tradition, but they have not been subject to English-language scrutiny before. Korean sources, on the other hand, have tended to focus on the lineages of individual singers (e.g. Kim Chinyang et al. 1993, Kim Kisu 1972, Lee So-young 2007, Joo Jae-keun 2006), and much work has been done in recent decades to correct the traditional picture which overemphasized the Ha Kyuŭl lineage to the exclusion of other singers. In my research on the genealogy of *chŏngga*, oral testimony by Yi Pohyŏng has been especially insightful, next to the genealogies discussed by Moon Hyun (2015) and Kim Minjŏng (2015). While many of the scholars who discuss *chŏngga* and teaching lineages must undoubtedly be aware of the contradictions surrounding the concept of the *wŏnhyŏng*, nobody has seen fit to challenge the official narrative, and no writings exist comparing the case to the long-standing theoretical debate on historical performance practise in Western academia.

Korean musical institutions during and after the Japanese colonial period are discussed in many sources, for example by Song Bang-Song (2007), Hahn Man-young (1990) and Howard (2002b), but specific information on *chŏngga* is harder to find. In my discussion of these institutions, the research by Sung Ki-Ryun (2004), Song Hyejin (2001) and Lee Jeonghee (2004) on the Court Music Bureau, the *Yŏwangjik aakpu*, as well as oral testimony by Pak Mun-gyu on *chŏngga* in universities, and by Yi Sŏngyun on the National Gugak High School have proved

essential. The approach chosen in my discussion of Korean musical institutions differs from previous writings in that I focus exclusively on *chŏngga*, bringing together a variety of very different sources, including fieldwork interviews. Research on Korea's intangible cultural property system has been conducted by Yang Jongsung (2003) and by Keith Howard (2006b, 2012). While Yang mostly treats the formal and legal minutiae of the preservation law and the system, Howard's work includes many testimonies by Korean musicians and scholars. Discussion of contemporary *chŏngga* practice is found in Moon Hyun (2015) who also treats regional *sijo*, as do Lim Mi-sun (2000, 2011), Jung Sue-eun (2012) and You Dae-Yong (2010). While Moon and Lim tangentially treat the preservation system in relation to *chŏngga*, no detailed discussion of its effects on *chŏngga* practice exists up to now.

For my discussion of *chŏngga*'s philosophical foundations, I refer to introductions to Confucianism and Daoism by Richard Wilhelm (1928, in an edition from 2007), Ronnie Littlejohn (2009, 2011) and Berthrong & Berthrong (2000). The role these intellectual traditions played in Korea is treated in detail in Kim Chongsuh et al. (1993) and Choung Haechang et al. (1996), while the research of Edward Ho (1997) and Kenneth De Woskin (2002) on aesthetics in Chinese traditions provides useful points of comparison. In the establishment of the Korean discourse on musical aesthetics, I draw on Byung-ki Hwang (1978, 2001) and Lee Byong Won (1997), whereas aesthetic discussion of *sijo* is found in Lee Hye-ku (1983), Kim Young-Uk (2013), Pak Sŏk (2010) and, by way of extension, Donna Kwon (1995). Previous writing on aesthetics has either tended to discuss all Korean traditional music, often with a focus on folk genres, or detailed individual concepts, but little attention has been paid to how philosophical concepts are realized musically, with the exception of Hwang JunYon (1999), or how new concepts are established. Finally, in discussing the aesthetic ideas on *chŏngga* held by contemporary performers, I draw on personal interviews conducted with five singers of different backgrounds and

specialities; a novel approach so far employed, as mentioned above, only by Park Sung-Hee (2011).

Useful accounts of the history of musicology in Korea, its style and some of the challenges it faces are by Lee Byong Won (2000), Song Bang-Song (1978), Song Bang-Song and Wolfgang Suppan (1985), and Keith Howard (2002a). This thesis builds on my MMus coursework and dissertation; during my MMus, I explored aspects of East Asian music, including comparisons of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean genres, politics, and styles. Since the literature I consulted during my MMus was broad, and went well beyond the topic I research here, I will not list it here. A number of reference works have been essential to the completion of my research, notably the online version of *The Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (*Han'guk minjok munhwa taebaek kwa sajon* under [encykorea.aks.ac.kr](http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr)), maintained and updated by the Academy of Korean Studies, for information on singers, notation books, traditional symbols associated with animals, plants and so on. Song Bang-Song's revised Korean music history (2007) has been useful especially with regard to early musical institutions, whereas I have consulted Keith Pratt and Richard Rutt's *Korea: A historical and cultural dictionary* (1999) especially for more general events, items and terms related to Korean history and literature. Finally, the homepage of the Cultural Heritage Bureau (*Munhwajae ch'ong*, under [cha.go.kr](http://cha.go.kr)) contains the most detailed information on regional sijo styles and appointments of intangible cultural property holders.

Discussions of sijo can also be found in number of Korean journals published by study societies, for example *Han'guk siga yŏn'gu*, *Han'guk siga munhwa yŏn'gu*, *Han'guk kojŏn yŏn'gu*, *Han'guk ŏnŏ munhwa*, *Pan'gyo ŏmun yŏn'gu* and *Sijobak nonch'ong* the last of which is exclusively dedicated to the study of sijo. Among the articles on sijo published in them, for example by Choi Jae-Nam (2001, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2012), Kim Ji-Eun (2012), Kim Sang-jean (2005), Kim Seong-Moon (2013), Lee Hwa-Hyung (2013), Park Sang-Young (2014), Park Young-Jun (2013), Song

Chonggwan (2002), Sung Mu-kyung (2009), the majority discuss *sijo* from a literary perspective, often employing novel approaches in their analysis of individual tropes, or portions of the canon by particular writers, and their perspective on *sijo* tends to be as either a literary or historical text.

### Editorial notes

In my thesis, I use the original McCune-Reischauer system of Romanisation without the later (1988) revision which spells ‘*s*’ as ‘*sh*’ to approximate Korean pronunciation, as in, for example, ‘*shijo*’ (I retain ‘*sijo*’); spellings that deviate from these conventions in quotations by other authors are left unchanged, however. The reason I do not follow the later modification is that the term ‘*sijo*’ has become established in this form and a divergence in spelling between this and other terms containing the syllable ‘*s*’ could lead to confusion. Where other spellings have become common for a term, such as ‘Seoul’ or ‘Busan’, these spellings are observed. Longer Romanised Korean terms are separated logically on the basis of perceived cohesion between individual syllables, rather than in pairs, for example ‘*Yimangjik aakpu*’ instead of ‘*Yimang chiga akpu*’. Unlike many English-language publications, I also add, when helpful, *hanja* Chinese characters in footnotes for important Sino-Korean vocabulary and names of pre-modern sources (but not individuals). In the first place this serves as a courtesy to readers who know Sino-Korean characters, and in the second it avoids confusion between homonyms; the most important reason why I do this, however, is to allow for the reader to trace the meaning of these terms through the meaning of the individual constituent characters and thereby gain an insight into this mechanism of word creation. Additional conventions apply in Chapter 8 that are explained in the introduction to that chapter.

References to Korean scholars respect the preferred spellings of their names where known (the spellings that appear in English academic articles or in the English abstracts at the end of Korean articles are assumed to be the author’s preference), partly to aid retrieval through search engines in Korean databases. However, the McCune Reischauer variant is given in brackets after

the name in the bibliography in all cases where I know the original spelling of a name (some Korean authors writing in English adopt English first names or romanize according to individual preference, both of which make tracing the original Korean spelling difficult). For individuals discussed as part of the research, the names used are those that they are known by, for example in the case of the poetic names of *kisaeng*, however, Korean *ho*, glossed as ‘penname’, are not used in this thesis to refer to individuals and are given only where relevant.

Translations of quotations and terms are mine unless noted otherwise; the language of a publication can be inferred from its title in the bibliography. Where possible, glosses by other (more knowledgeable) authors are used, for example ‘Korean Court Music Study Institute’, Hahn Man-young’s term<sup>4</sup> for the *Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpso*.

Sijo sample poems are picked in a way that wherever possible counteracts the tendency of a few famous texts appearing and being discussed over and over again in writings. They are referenced by their number in Chŏng Pyŏnguk’s widely used sijo encyclopaedia *Sijo munhak sajŏn* (1966), preceded by the abbreviation SMS. Translations of the poems are taken from three sijo anthologies (Jaihiun Joyce Kim 1986, Rutt 1998, O’Rourke 2002), to provide a diverse picture of the possible approaches to the translation of sijo and their results.

While the use of the not uncontroversial term ‘informant’ is standard practice in many anthropological writings, Korean students in my position would call those they interview – experts on the subject matter, older and more studied than themselves – *sŏnsaengnim*,<sup>5</sup> the standard word for ‘teacher’. This practice seems sensible to me in translation as well; all the singers and scholars who dedicated their time and efforts to answering my questions and helping me with my research are my ‘teachers’.

## Contacts and interviews

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<sup>4</sup> Since Hahn Man-young’s volume was translated and edited by Inok Paek and Keith Howard, all references to English terms by Hahn can be assumed to be, in fact, glosses by Howard.

<sup>5</sup> 先生 – first – live = “the one born earlier”.

A brief discussion about the choice of teachers and the interviews is in order. I was fortunate to have many valuable acquaintances fall into place, partly thanks to my host institution, the Academy of Korean Studies in Seongnam, where I stayed for the entire year of my fieldwork and took part in the AKS Research Grant programme during the first six months. During my time there, I took a class taught by guest lecturer and celebrated Korean folklore scholar Yi Pohyŏng and enrolled in an individual study course, in which I discussed my research in biweekly supervision meetings with musicologist Sheen Dae-Cheol. Through a fortunate coincidence I met Cho Kyu-Ick, Korean literature professor at Soongsil University who has written an important and challenging account of *sijo* as poetry: Gary Younger, an American PhD student and fellow participant in the grant programme (who tragically passed away in a car accident in early 2016) knew Cho from his times at Oklahoma State University, and took me along to a meeting. Keith Howard introduced me to Cheong Moon-kyo, the president of Synnara Records who was extremely helpful in outlining Synnara's catalogue and generously provided me with lots of valuable and rare recordings of great master singers such as Ha Kyuil, Hong Wŏngi and Kim Wŏlha. Also thanks to Keith Howard, I had established e-mail contact with my *sijo* teacher Moon Hyun even before coming to Korea, but I first met him thanks to an invitation by Cho Kyu-Ick. As the first step of my research into *sijo* teaching in institutions, I met with Sung Ki-Ryun, musicology professor at the Academy of Korean Studies, for information on *sijo* in the curricula of Korean elementary and middle schools, as well as with Yi Sŭngyun, a *chŏngak* teacher at the Gugak National High School in Gangnam who allowed me to visit general and major-specific classes at the school for an insight into *chŏngak* teaching in this institution. The contact with Yi Sŭngyun was established by Sung Ki-Ryun through Yi Tonghŭi, a lecturer at the Gugak National High School, who referred me to Yi Sŭngyun.

In Yi Pohyŏng's class, I became friends with Yoo Kyeong Eun, a PhD student and *taegŭm* performer from Seoul National University who audited the class. After refining my research focus during the second half of my fieldwork period, I discussed my interview questions with her,



to make sure that they were grammatically correct and my teachers would understand them. I thus had a sheet of interview questions which I modified slightly before each interview to match the expertise of the singers. For the most part, however, I tried not to stick to these questions too closely, so that a natural conversation could develop, in which my teachers would share their expertise beyond the questions. Kyeong Eun was also kind enough to accompany me to two interviews, with Yi Pohyŏng and Kim Yŏnggi, both of whom had taught her in the past, and she made helpful etiquette suggestions with regard to my written communication in setting up the interviews and the choice of gifts, all of which allowed me to approach the interviews with greater confidence.

In our second meeting, Yi Sŏngyun agreed to contact a number of additional singers for interview requests, and I met Pak Mun-gyu, Yeh Chan-kun and Kim Yŏnggi thanks to her.

It is worth quickly commenting on the standing of my teachers. Ethnomusicologists do not always have access to the best musicians and informants, but I feel lucky to say that the people I managed to work with and interview were the top-level performers and scholars of *chŏngga*, with a representative range of backgrounds and specialities, including specialists on *sijo* and regional *sijo*, as well as representatives of all the important *chŏngga*-related institutions. Although with more time additional interviews could have been arranged, I remembered an admonition made by Angela Impey in our music research seminar about “research fatigue” and informants who are asked the same questions many times over by different researchers. Where doing so is useful, I have therefore drawn on interviews already conducted and presented in Park Sung-Hee’s research, with singers such as Yi Yang-gyo, Kim Hosŏng and Kim Kyŏngbae.

## Part I: Introduction to Sijo

### Chapter 1. The sijo form

#### Introduction

In this first chapter, I discuss the characteristics of the sijo form which needs to be treated in terms of two forms – the form of the text and the form of the music. Scholarly discussions of the sijo form exist in two separate branches, depending on whether they discuss the sijo text or sijo's musical structure. It makes sense to uphold this separation to a certain degree, but to also show how understanding of one can lead to new insights about the other. A conclusive model of the sijo form does not exist up to this day, and is still a topic hotly debated among scholars. The very idea of the sijo form is to some degree an anachronism, and it will become clear that the concept of a musical or poetic form in the way we think about it nowadays makes an uneasy fit with sijo.

The first section of this chapter introduces the historical background in which theories were first formulated, and discusses the fundamental problems associated with the competing views on sijo's literary form. The second section delves into the body of scholarship that exists on the sijo form from a literary perspective. After introducing the necessary terminology, I go into detail about the influential theories that have been formulated by both Korean and by Western scholars. Among other things, I elucidate the different parameters that have been construed as bearing relevance on the characteristics of sijo. The third section briefly introduces the context of sijo as a musical genre and how sijo as music compares to related genres within the greater category of *chŏngga*, Korean classical song. The fourth section deals with the musical form. Both the musical setting called *sijo-ch'ang* which is usually referred to when Koreans speak of sijo in a musical

context, and an older musical setting to which *sijo* used to be and continues to be sung, the *kagok-ch'ang*, concern me here, although the latter to a lesser degree. This section incorporates discussion of concepts through which Korean musicologists and musicians define *sijo*, and how these distinguish the genre from other *chŏngak* genres such as *kagok* and *kasa*. In the conclusion at the end of this thesis, I summarize and synthesize these different bodies of research, elucidating how the findings of musicologists cast a contrasting light on the theories formulated by those who study *sijo* as literary genre.

### 1.1 The *sijo* form: Historical background and problems

The Chosŏn era (1392–1910) can be called the natural habitat of *sijo*. Although a number of poems have been attributed to Koryŏ-dynasty (918–1392) poets, we can say that *sijo* poems enjoyed popularity throughout the whole of Chosŏn, that the majority of the present *sijo* canon stems from this era, and that the *sijo* form shows relative uniformity throughout this time span. Several facts about *sijo* during Chosŏn, which are treated in more detail in Chapter 2, must be pointed out as important preliminaries to the discussion. The three most important ones concern the term ‘*sijo*’, the lack of theoretical material on vernacular poetry from that era, and *sijo*’s musical background.

The term ‘*sijo*’, as a unifying denomination of the poems we know as such today, did not enjoy currency prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and referred only to song; in such a sense, the first occurrence of it is in a record from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, the *sijo* that we find in anthologies and collections from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and before were not at that time or earlier referred to as *sijo*. Instead, a host of other often casually related terms were in use to denote this form of poetry. Secondly, during the Chosŏn era, *sijo* were written and sung, but not usually written about. Although there is documentation that records performances of *sijo*, there is not a single known treatise or document of any type that provides a theoretical discussion of *sijo*, let alone includes considerations of its form. Finally, what we know today as *sijo* poems are seen in

current treatises as having been song texts prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to this end were recorded in anthologies with a practical use for performance. The primary performance mode for *sijo* used to be the *kagok-ch'ang* which scholars have determined came to be replaced by the *sijo-ch'ang* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before the *kagok-ch'ang*, though, another performance mode presumably existed, making it likely that the texts we know as *sijo* nowadays, as much as everything else that is subsumed under the umbrella term vernacular 'poetry' – as opposed to poetry in Classical Chinese – were musical forms from the point of their inception (Cho Kyu-Ick 1994).

The colonial era (1910–1945) is marked by a revival of the *sijo* form; it is the era of the first writings, the first literary criticism and the first theories of *sijo* in the wake of its appropriation as a symbol of Korean identity. Its appropriation, and its new status as a literary form – as poetry rather than music – led to the formulation of the first theories of the *sijo* form, together with new terminology to describe its structure. The commonly given explanation of the *sijo* form is still indebted to what were the enormously influential first writings. The best example of this is the three-line structure of *sijo* which has since been carved in stone; it has been abstracted from the *sijo-ch'ang* performance mode, in which these lines corresponded to musical sections. Notwithstanding this, for the longer part of documented *sijo* history, *sijo* were performed to the *kagok-ch'ang* which demanded a division of the text into five lines which also aligned with structural musical sections. In fact, most of the classic anthologies presented the texts in either such a five-section arrangement, or as continuous prose texts (O'Rourke 2002:8). The three main observations concerning the formulation of theories about the *sijo* form, then, are as follows: The different attempts at structurally analysing the *sijo* form and the singling out (breath) groups, syllable count, and so on, had no precedent when the theories appeared in the 1920s, and they were formulated by observing the phenomena that were found in the *sijo* poems surveyed. As such they were abstractions from a total number of poems, and the many controversies over the accurate grouping of syllables are warranted by the fact that many of the poems did not conform to these abstractions.

Secondly, there is no evidence that these abstracted characteristics served at any point as structural concepts to the writers of *sijo* in Chosŏn dynasty. However, it is known that the first *sijo* scholars were familiar with Japanese and, to a lesser degree, Western literary forms where such concepts are essential. In particular, the parallels to the strict syllable count of Japanese haiku<sup>1</sup> are conspicuous. Finally, it is clear that *sijo* were appropriated as a vehicle of nationalist sentiment, and, as such, the theories can partly be interpreted as attempts to find a deeper structural logic in the poems, in order to raise their status to a higher level of refinement which could stand comparison with foreign poetry.

The commonly given explanation of the form of the *sijo* text is simple: a *sijo* is written in vernacular Korean and consists of three lines; lines are composed of four syllable groups that each encompass three or four syllables with some room for variation; with regard to the poem's thematic unfolding, the first two lines are said to correspond to 'stating of the theme' and 'development of the theme' while the third line brings 'anti-theme' or 'twist', and 'conclusion'.

*Sijo*'s musical form is more easily defined: In musical terms, *sijo* is essentially *one* song (whereas, in literary terms, *sijo* is a genre). With this in mind, we can look at old notations, presumed predecessors of what are recorded (for which see Chapter 2.5) and musical variants, but these are not conceptualized as various songs in the musical genre of *sijo*, but as variants of the same song. In the case of *sijo* texts, there are also variants of the same text, but the majority are distinct texts within the literary form of the *sijo* genre.

While a song is easily described, a literary form is more difficult to define. Where does the confusion about the *sijo* form come from? One of the major difficulties we face in answering this question arises from the fact that scholars since the 1920s have tried to explain *sijo* as a type of fixed verse poetry with syllable count as its main structural feature. In East Asia, this concept has precedent: Japanese haiku consists of three parts with five, seven and five syllables, respectively, while Chinese quatrains are divided into types with five or seven syllables per line. These rules

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<sup>1</sup> *Sijo* are often thought of as "Korea's equivalent to Japanese haiku"; I have as yet been unable to determine the roots of this assessment.

reflect not only structural features observable in the finished product, but also their mode of production: they are descriptive and prescriptive. Japanese and Chinese writers undoubtedly were aware of these rules on syllable count and followed them. Although the rules concerning syllable count are not the only structural features in these poetic forms, following the template will in all cases result in a poem that fulfils the formal characteristics of the form. For example, Henderson describes the early attempts in the haiku form by the Japanese Danrin School in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which he paints as generally considered to be weak examples, and their authors the “dunces’ of haiku” (1958:21). Still, no one debates that these are haiku because they follow the formula that characterizes the genre.

Sijo writing is much more difficult to describe in such simple terms. While most scholars have abstracted and described structural features, no mention is usually made of whether they consider the rules to be prescriptive. In other words, scholars have been conspicuously guarded about whether they consider the rules they identify to have been the rules that the writers of sijo followed in their production – and with good reason. Accordingly, the descriptions of the sijo form fall squarely on the descriptive side, although this has not kept modern sijo writers from using them as prescriptive models. The problem is that whichever scholarly description we want to subscribe to, each tends to be much too complicated to have served as an unspoken prescriptive model that the sijo writers in Chosŏn times worked with; on the other hand, if there had been an explicit prescriptive model, we ought to be able to find documentation about it. The problem becomes clearly apparent when we suppose that I claim the following: “A sijo is a poem which uses between x and y letters per poem (x and y being numbers I have arrived at through the analysis of a sample of sijo).” While a poetry form like the Japanese haiku does derive its formula from the syllable count, there may be post-modern writers who follow the procedure I suggest;<sup>2</sup> so while my suggestion is not without precedent, still, the assumption that this was indeed the sijo writers’ formula, is absurd. Research such as that by Kim Chin-Woo on

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<sup>2</sup> I have no exact example to hand, but the French writer Raymond Roussel’s novels, based on highly abstract rules of letter replacement, offer one similar example.

metrical phonology discussed below is therefore enlightening in that it can reveal hidden characteristics in sijo and maybe even Korean poetic language in general, but it is less useful as a tool to explain the creation of sijo.

An example of misappropriating a descriptive model for prescriptive purposes has been pointed out by Shin Woong-Soon (2015, see also 2012). He notes that many modern sijo do not observe the fact that the three sections in traditional sijo are grammatically independent. Breaking the rule would create a problem in sijo performance as the musical sections would end on a grammatically incomplete phrase, so the result is that modern sijo have become estranged from sijo's original context as a musical genre. Clearly, modern sijo writers have thought that what they were writing was sijo, basing what they did on a prescriptive model – syllable count, presumably – but, as a prescriptive formulation, their use of such a model can be considered to have been faulty, resulting in something that does not work in the traditional, performed, application of sijo texts.

## 1.2 The form of the sijo text

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discussion of the sijo form has come full circle. I found the most important evidence for this after conducting some detective work<sup>3</sup> around Chŏng Pyŏnguk's *Chŭngbop'an han'guk kojŏn sigaron* (1999b). I start by outlining the standard model of the sijo form, which in its many variations is the achievement of a first generation of sijo scholars – we might also say the inventors of sijo as a literary genre – who began their work in the 1920s. It is the most widespread model in the academic mainstream and the anthologies. While the model has drawn considerable criticism in the last decades, it is nonetheless useful to start with a description of this standard explanation; one reason is to introduce the most commonly construed parameters of the sijo form – the relevant sijo terminology – which most other theories modify in some way or another, and the second is that this is the theory with which sijo

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<sup>3</sup> Thanks go to the SOAS librarians Fujiko Kobayashi and Jiyeon Wood who were extremely helpful in my investigation.

scholars are familiar and in relation to which they position their own models. In explaining this model, I mostly draw on the above-mentioned work whose author is a seasoned *sijo* authority;<sup>4</sup> his work presents the standard model as the established theory of the *sijo* form in a concise and comprehensible section (1999b:201-4). Yet, when I contacted the SOAS librarians about a publication called ‘Rhythm and Form in Korean Poetry’<sup>5</sup> by the same author, cited by O’Rourke as including a discussion of various theories on the *sijo* form (2002:4), I learned that this publication had actually been a chapter in earlier editions of Chŏng Pyŏnguk’s volume, and had mysteriously disappeared altogether in the *Chŏngbop’an* (revised) edition available to me. Given Chŏng’s familiarity with and his own contributions to criticism of the *sijo* form, which clearly address the inadequacies of the standard model, it seems striking how the most recent edition presents the standard form as if all the discussions had never existed, and as if the author had given up or was implying that the standard model may not be accurate, but is no worse than the many others proposed.

The following description is intended to show that the standard model is complicated and that the critical terminology at times exhibits considerable overlap, redundancy and lack of clarity.<sup>6</sup> The standard model presents *sijo* as a fixed-form poem with three sections (*chang/-jang*)<sup>7</sup> and no more than 45 syllables (*cha*, *ŭm* or *ŭmjŏl*).<sup>8</sup> When several *sijo* poems are grouped to form a *sijo* cycle, one such poem can also be referred to as a stanza (*yŏn*) within the greater context. The three sections are visually arranged as three lines (*haeng*) and are designated as opening section (*ch’o-ang*), middle section (*chung-ang*) and final section (*chong-ang*). Each section is divided into four

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<sup>4</sup> The book is part of an eight-volume cycle on diverse aspects of Korean literature and may be seen as Chŏng’s *magnum opus*, the result of a long scholarly career dedicated to Korean literature.

<sup>5</sup> *Han’guk shiga ŭi unyul-gwa hyŏngt’ae*.

<sup>6</sup> Since English equivalents of Korean terminology have currency in the academic literature (even Korean-language publications), the English terms will be used with Korean terminological equivalents given in brackets. Although I follow the description given by Chŏng Pyŏnguk (1999b:201-3), deviations from his use of terminology by other commentators will be noted.

<sup>7</sup> Lee Ki-chin et al. translate *chang* as ‘verse’ (1986:12).

<sup>8</sup> *Cha* refers to one unit in the Korean script, equivalent to one Chinese character in the case of Sino-Korean vocabulary. *Ŭm* means ‘sound’ or ‘utterance’, and highlights the auditory dimension, *ŭmjŏl*, on the other hand, literally means a syllable and is a more technical term of presumably modern coinage.



syllable groups<sup>9</sup> or feet (*pogyŏk* or *ŭmbo*) with two of these always forming a breath group<sup>10</sup> (*summukŭm*); the two breath groups are divided by a caesura (*shwim*) in the middle of the section. Such a syllable group or foot is in turn usually composed of three or four syllables, depending on its position in the section and the position of the section itself, which brings the number of syllables per section to typically between fourteen and sixteen. The typical arrangement for the syllable numbers, also referred to as the ideal count, is as follows:

3 · 4 · 4 · 4 (Opening section)

3 · 4 · 4 · 4 (Middle section)

3 · 5 · 4 · 3 (Final section)

The rhythm or meter (*unŭl*) of *sijo* is described at the breath group level as having a form of either a 3 · 4 unit (*cho*) or 4 · 4 unit shape.<sup>11</sup> While the term ‘unit’ (*cho*) technically also refers to a syllable, it seems to be used only in the context of discussions of *sijo*’s rhythmic properties. The flexibility of the syllable count in *sijo* is defined as follows: in any of the syllable groups, the number can be adjusted by up to two syllables up or downwards with the exception of the first two syllable groups of the end section, the first of which must always have three syllables, and the second of which must have five or more, but never less than five syllables.<sup>12</sup> A *sijo* (SMS 2066)<sup>13</sup> by Chŏng Ch’ŏl (1536-1593) helps in exemplifying this terminology; the following bracket types and symbols are used to highlight the different formal modalities: section: { }; breath group: [ ]; syllable group: ( ); caesura: X.

{[(Ch’ŏngsan ŭi) (pūhūn pippal)]X[(kūi ŏtti) (nal soginūn)]}

<sup>9</sup> Also shortened to just ‘groups’.

<sup>10</sup> Various commentators apply the term ‘breath group’ as another equivalent of the syllable group or foot (e.g. Peter H. Lee 1965:38, O’Rourke 2002:38, see also McCann 1988:3). I adhere to Chŏng Pyŏnguk’s suggestion because it appears as an attempt to unify and streamline the model and terminology of the *sijo* form after evaluating different sources.

<sup>11</sup> This may seem like an observation of little consequence unless we know that the 3 · 4 unit shape is held as a characteristic of Korean vernacular poetry across other genres as well.

<sup>12</sup> Analysis by McCann shows that even these last two rules have their exceptions in some *sijo* (1988:15). Additional illustration comes from Kim Sangsŏn who provides a list of *sijo* in which the first syllable group of the last section has only two syllables (1979:169).

<sup>13</sup> As explained in the introduction, this abbreviation refers to the number under which this *sijo* is listed in Chŏng Pyŏng-uk’s monumental *sijo* anthology *Sijo munhak sajŏn* (1966).

{[(*Toerong kanmang*) (*nuyōg?*)]X[(*nōnūn ōtchi*) (*nal soginūn*)]}  
 {[(*Ōkekūje*) (*pidanot pōsūni*)]X[(*tōlmūlgōsi*) (*ōpsōra*)]}<sup>14</sup>

Milky rain-mist on the green hills,

Surely you won't deceive me?

Rain-cape sedge and horsehair hat,

Surely you too won't deceive me?

Two days ago I put off my silken dothes.

Now I've nothing that can be stained.<sup>15</sup>

In this poem, the syllable count is as follows, and closely approximates the above-mentioned ideal count without showing substantial deviations:

3 · 4 · 3 · 4 (Beginning section)

4 · 3 · 4 · 4 (Middle section)

3 · 6 · 4 · 3 (End section)

Another poem (SMS 1103) by the same author provides further illustration:

{[(*Saenŏn*) (*nŏnju toeyō*)]X[(*sibirūl*) (*koch'ō takko*)]}  
 {[(*Yusu*) (*ch'ōngsanūl*)]X[(*pōssama*) (*tōjōnnora*)]}  
 {[(*Abūiya*) (*pyōkche'e soniragōdūn*)]X[(*nal nagada*) (*bagoryō*)]}

Now that I'm keeper of the state guesthouse

<sup>14</sup> Wherever possible, I here use the Korean texts from Jaihiun Joyce Kim's *Han'guk ko sijo: Classical Korean Poetry – more than 600 verses since the 12th century*, which are adjusted to modern spelling, as the basis for romanisation, rather than the versions from the SMS. Since there was no standardised orthography at the times of sijo creation, there are no standard rules of romanisation for many of the uncommon letter combinations which are now obsolete; using the adjusted spelling should, however, result in the same correct pronunciation. In rare cases, adjusted spelling may lead to minor changes in the syllable count, but they will not be relevant for present purposes.

<sup>15</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 152). Example poems are chosen at random from three anthologies of English translations by Rutt (1998), Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986) and O'Rourke (2002), in order to serve as a sample that exemplifies the variety in form and content to be found in the extant sijo canon. At the same time, the sample illustrates the different approaches to translation which depend on the formal logic each translator subscribes to; the reasoning behind these approaches is explained in the introduction. I choose example poems at random to counteract a tendency that only a small number of poems ever seem to be included in much writing on sijo which arouses the suspicion that these poems might be selected because they are the ones that most comfortably conform to the point an author is trying to make. If rules of form or content are to be universal, it is understood that they should apply to any randomly selected sijo.

I dose the brushwood gate again.

I throw myself among flowing waters and blue mountains; these I take as friends.

Boy,

should a caller say he's from Pyökdhe, tell him I'm out.<sup>16</sup>

For this poem, the syllable count deviates slightly more from the ideal count, but not beyond the scope of sijo's postulated flexibility:

2 · 4 · 3 · 4 (Beginning section)

2 · 3 · 3 · 4 (Middle section)

3 · 8 · 4 · 3 (End section)

The last missing piece of terminology is the slightly more elusive concept of the phrase (*ku* or *kwi*;<sup>17</sup> sometimes extended to *kuch'e* or *kujöl*); its elusiveness is reflected by the fact that different scholars have identified varying numbers of phrases to be found in sijo. With 'phrase' as the literal meaning of *ku*, the function of this structural unit can only be inferred, since Korean sources do not clarify what actually constitutes a phrase. The proposed number of phrases for sijo poems varies between six, eight and 12; accordingly, in these models the 12-phrase structure equals one phrase with a syllable group; the six-phrase structure suggests the breath groups as the equivalent of the phrase; and, finally, the eight-phrase structure suggests viewing the breath groups of the first two sections as one phrase each, and each single syllable group of the end section as a phrase of its own, highlighting the special status of the end section. With such a divergence of opinions and options,<sup>18</sup> we can only infer the phrase to be something approaching a 'semantic unit'; the generally established model is said to be the six-phrase model, so when the term 'phrase' appears, it can for present purposes be assumed to be equivalent in meaning to the breath group.

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<sup>16</sup> Translation by O'Rourke (2002:75, No. 157).

<sup>17</sup> Depending on the reading of the constituting Sino-Korean character.

<sup>18</sup> This discussion took place in the 1920s between the members of the first generation of sijo commentators, e.g. Yi Kwangsu, Yi Pyönggi, Cho Yunje and others (O'Rourke 2002:3).

The form outlined so far<sup>19</sup> is that of the standard *sijo*, in Korean called *tanhyŏng sijo* (short form *sijo*) or *p'yŏng sijo* (plain *sijo*), and this comprises the biggest number among all extant *sijo*. There are two extended variants of this standard form, which are called the *chungbyŏng sijo* (middle form *sijo*) or *ŏt* *sijo*, and the *changbyŏng sijo* (long form *sijo*) or *sasŏl sijo* (narrative *sijo*). Chŏng Pyŏnguk defines the form of these variants as follows: an *ŏt sijo* is like a *p'yŏng sijo* except that one of the phrases which must not be the first phrase of the end section is extended; in a *sasŏl sijo*, two or more of the phrases are extended (1999b:203-4).

Here is an example of an *ŏt sijo* (SMS 540) by Kim Sujang (1690-?):

{[(Nŭlgi) (shŏrneran mari)]X[(nŭlgŭn ŭi) (mangnyŏngiroda)]}  
 {[ (Chŏnjikangsanŭn) (mubanjangiyo) (injijŏngmyŏngŭn) (paengnyŏn'ganinŭ)]X[(shŏrnera) (hanŭnmari) (amuryŏdo)  
 (mangnyŏngiroda)]}  
 {[ (Tnŏra) (mangnyŏngŭet mariŭn)]X[(nŏ musŭm) (bario)]}

To say that growing old is sad

is the talk of a senile fool.

Heaven and earth have no limits; man's allotted span is a hundred years. All talk of sadness is the raving of a fool.

So be it:

what's the point of laughing at senility?<sup>21</sup>

The syllable count of

2 · 5 · 3 · 5 (Beginning section)

5 · 5 · 5 · 5 · 3 · 4 · 4 · 5 (Middle section)

3 · 5 · 4 · 3 (End section)

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that no two sources ever identify exactly the same rules. Depending on the sample of *sijo* which a scholar examines to come to his conclusions, his definitions will differ in some details: Typical differences are ideal counts with slightly adjusted numbers or giving ranges instead of the 'plus or minus two syllable' rule, or even models that establish rules on which syllable groups most often deviate from the ideal count. These are just different versions of the same idea, so these variants will not be considered further.

<sup>20</sup> The *ŏ* in *ŏt* is presently written using the Sino-Korean character *ŏn* (言 – word), but other characters were in use in the past, and it is interpreted as meaning 'halfway' (Chang Sa-Hun 1986:29).

<sup>21</sup> Translation by O'Rourke (2002:125, No. 319).

clearly shows how the middle section is extended with four additional syllable groups whereas the other sections closely resemble the ideal count.

The following is an example (SMS 1423) of a *sasŏl* sijo of anonymous authorship:

{[(Ŏjeppamdo) (bonja) (kopsonkekŭryŏ) (saeujam chago)]X[(chinan pamdo) (bonja) (kopsonkekŭryŏ) (saeujam chani)]}  
 {[Ŏinnom ũi) (p'alchagā) (chuyajangsange)]X[(kopsonkekŭryŏ) (saeujamman chanda)]}  
 {[Ŏnŭrŭn) (kŭridŏn nim nassŭnŭ)]X[(parŭl) (p'yŏ pŏlligo) (shinŏnbi) (chalkka) (hanora)]}

Last night I slept alone, curled up like a shrimp;

and the night before, I slept alone, curled up like a shrimp.

What sort of life is this? Every night without a break,

I always sleep alone, curled up like a shrimp.

But today the man I love has come:

I wonder whether I'll stretch my legs and sleep relaxed tonight?<sup>22</sup>

This example is a more clumsy fit to the patterns established so far, which is fortunate in that it forces me to comment on (and find explanations to) some problems that most writing in English has left unexplored. Specifically, this *sasŏl* sijo draws our attention to three difficulties in applying the theory of the sijo form to any random sample: extended ‘phrases’, syllable group borders and breath group borders. The terminology used by Chŏng Pyŏnguk and others to define these extended variants creates a problem, in that what seems to be extended in each variant is one or two of the ‘sections’ rather than ‘phrases’, no matter which of the definitions of ‘phrase’ we adhere to. If we look at the *ŏt* sijo above, the middle section is extended by having two breath groups of four syllable groups each. If we remember that the ‘phrase’ equals the breath or, according to another definition, syllable group, we would clearly end up with more than one extended phrase for this poem, which according to Chŏng Pyŏnguk’s definition would make it a *sasŏl* sijo. This observation is corroborated by the examples that Kim Taehaeng includes for the *ŏt* sijo which display similar characteristics; he likewise comments that “the different definitions of

<sup>22</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 86).

what a ‘phrase’ constitutes and from where to where it extends is bound to cause another problem” (1986:41). Defining these variants as having extended phrases blurs the line between *ōt* and *sasōl* sijo. The extended sections of Kim Taehaeng’s example poems have five and eight syllable groups respectively, a discrepancy which leads him to wonder how they can belong to the same category (1986:41-2). He furthermore points out that the definition of the *ōt* sijo is a contested issue among scholars, with some arguing that as a classification adopted from the musical terminology of sijo, there is no adequate use for it in the literary realm, which makes it unnecessary (1986:40-2; see also Chang Sa-Hun 1986:29).

The divisions I have established in the *sasōl* sijo above render the following syllable count:

4· 2· 4· 5· 4· 2· 4· 5            (Beginning section)

4· 3· 5· 4· 6                    (Middle section)

3· 7· 2· 3· 3· 2· 3            (End section)

But this poem shows some ambiguity as to the way in which the syllables are grouped together, and other distributions could be suggested. The way in which I have grouped the syllables into groups can be seen as a compromise between groupings that are the likely or even necessary results of their numbers, and units that exhibit logical cohesion. Some examples will illustrate this. First, in the second syllable group of the end section, the expression *kūridōn nim wassūmi* (the man I love has come) has been grouped together. Grammatically, this syllable group is composed of the modifier *kūridōn* (that... I love; lit.: that I yearned for), the noun *nim* (the man; lit.: my love) and the verb form *wassūmi* (has come; lit.: because... came). While the first two logically go together as a noun and a verb form that modifies the noun, the link is less convincing with the verb form that follows. Yet, the rule that the second syllable group in the end section has to contain five or more syllables forces me to include it with the rest, since *kūridōn nim* alone would only be four syllables which is not sufficient. Another example is *chalkka hanoru* (I wonder whether I’ll... sleep) at the very end of the end section which I have decided to separate into two syllable groups despite the first part with just two syllables being quite short for a syllable group

of its own. Moreover, the two words together form the common grammatical construction of – *lkka handa* (wondering whether something will be the case); as *chalkka* (will/shall I sleep?) and *hanora* (I wonder/think/ask). There is no doubt, then, that the two should be in one syllable group, at least if it were not for the fact that *hanora* is one of the typical formulaic endings of a great number of sijo poems and is always separated into its own syllable group. The problem, in other words, is that there are neither convincing rules nor an overriding logical principle by which the syllables are distributed into groups, which can lead to ambiguity and diverse interpretations. This is not to say that the distribution is always a matter of opinion; once again, there are far too many sijo for which the distribution is immediately apparent and in no way debatable for the syllable group to be denied as a structural feature observable in the majority of sijo. In the extended variants of sijo, however, the ambiguity increases since we do not know how many syllable groups we are looking for. A similar problem arises with the two breath groups in each section and the dividing caesura in between. In any *p'yŏng* sijo, identifying both of these is simple enough: Since there are four syllable groups, each set of two make up a breath group and the caesura goes in the middle. It is more difficult when the number of syllable groups is extended and possibly uneven as in the middle section of our *sasŏl* sijo example; in this case I have chosen what appeared as the most likely logical division. It should be remembered that this body of rules was not formulated by the writers of sijo, but by scholars who abstracted it based on what they observed; it cannot be denied that the inconsistencies mentioned here make these models rather tenuous. The formal criteria discussed so far constitute the core of the theoretical framework that has been applied to sijo; to this core framework, another aspect may be added which moves slightly beyond pure formal criteria and lies at its intersection with sijo's content: it is sijo's sense structure. In its simplest form, sijo's four-part sense structure is another widely accepted feature; the four parts correspond to 1. stating of the theme (*ke*), 2. development of the theme (*sŭng*), 3. anti-theme or twist (*chŏn*), and 4. conclusion (*kyŏl*).<sup>23</sup> This structure upholds that of the Chinese

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<sup>23</sup> English terms after Rutt (1998:11). In his discussion of aesthetics in Chinese literati music, Edward Ho advocates this four-part structure as a fundamental principle in Chinese aesthetic thought which equally applies

quatrain in which each of the parts is aligned with one section, or line. Sijo, however, which consist of only three sections, condense the third and fourth part into the final section. I will clarify this structure with a poem (SMS 1050) by the famous female entertainer Hwang Chini<sup>24</sup> (1502-1530):

*Sanŭn yet sanirodoe murŭn yet mul aniroda*

*Chuya'e būrŭni yet muri issŭlsonya*

*In'gŏldo mulgwa kattoda kago anionomaera*

The mountains are ancient,

not so the waters.

Water flowing night and day, how can it be the same?

Great men

are like that water; they go but do not return.<sup>25</sup>

The poem starts with the antithesis of mountain and water which in sijo poems are frequently equated with the contrasting attributes of permanence and impermanence: the theme is stated. The second section elaborates on the nature of the latter, water: the theme is developed. The third section abruptly introduces a foreign element into the heretofore uninhabited landscape, creating a momentary confusion over how we get from mountains and water to great men: the twist. The conclusion then explains the connection: the great men are likened to the water in terms of their impermanence.<sup>26</sup>

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to non-verbal art forms; he uses the term *qi cheng zhuan he* (起承轉合, pronounced *kisŭngjŏnhap* in Korean, it replaces the last character *kyŏl* (結) with *hap*), which he glosses as “start-continuation-change-synthesis” (see also Pratt and Rutt 1999:461). Keith Howard points out that musicologists, including Lee Hye-ku (1908–2010) as the ‘founder of Korean musicology’, often make use of this same four-part division to discuss structure in many traditional music genres (personal communication, July 2017).

<sup>24</sup> The poem was purportedly written upon the death of her tutor, the scholar Sŏ Kyŏngdŏk. Biographical dates for Hwang Chini are inconsistent across different sources.

<sup>25</sup> Translation by O’Rourke (2002:56, No. 75).

<sup>26</sup> The overt meaning of this comparison seems evident: great men are impermanent because the tutor, whom it is dedicated to, has just passed away. However, there are other possible interpretations for this text which bring the mountains mentioned at the beginning into the equation: The mountain stands for women like the author herself, who as a female entertainer was more restricted in her lifestyle and mobility, as opposed to her tutor, scholar-officials, or even men in general who enjoyed a much greater degree of personal freedom. If we provide the



The standard model of the *sijo* form has been criticized in several ways and alternative explanations have been put forward to account for its formal characteristics. It is easy to see the shortcomings of this standard model, since a model with such flexibility and so many exceptions to even the loosest set of rules is bound to seem unsatisfactory as the basis of a fixed-form poem. Yet, even a quick glance over a sample of *sijo* texts shows that there are too many texts which neatly conform to this standard model, certainly too many to be dismissed as some form of mere coincidence.<sup>27</sup> The most common criticism argues against syllable count as the main structural principle in *sijo* and claims that the amount of exceptions and flexibility make it an unlikely candidate for occupying such a central role among *sijo*'s formal characteristics. One of these has been formulated by David McCann, who in the 1970s attempted the first in-depth analysis of vernacular Korean poetry forms, criticizing the syllable-count hypothesis on the grounds of the significant range of variations in the different groups, and instead advocating the rhythmic group (or breath group *ũmbŏ*) as the fundamental constituent of rhythmical structure. His assessment is based on his observation that variations are greater and more likely to occur in certain rhythmic groups than in others. However, under the aspect of *sijo* creation, this explanation is unsatisfying in that it is even more complicated and thus even more unlikely to resemble concepts the writers themselves were working with. Another theory worth mentioning is that of Kim Chin-Woo who draws partly on McCann, but goes much further in his complicated analysis of *sijo* (1981). Applying theories of metrical phonology to *sijo*, he argues that the rhythm in *sijo* does not derive from syllable count, but from the weight of syllable groups (the term he uses is *keu*) in relation to each other. The results of his analyses are hierarchical tree diagrams which assign relative weight to the syllable groups, pointing out four – two – one – three as the order of descending weight

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further context that most *sijo* by or attributed to Hwang Chini have love or lovesickness as their topic, we can even interpret that a man – the water – can go to where his love is, whereas a lovesick woman – the mountain – is condemned to wait for her love to come to her.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, *sijo*'s status as a fixed-form poem has been called into question by scholars such as Kim Sangsŏn who summarizes the problem saying that, “*sijo* has too much flexibility to be considered a fixed form, but too much regularity to be considered a non-fixed form” (1979:150). He therefore suggests calling the form *chŏnghyŏng ibi chŏnghyŏng* (定型而非定型 = fixed, but not fixed; 1979: 147), an expression originally devised by Yi T'aegŭk.

for the syllable groups;<sup>28</sup> this is in agreement with the observation of other commentators such as Richard Rutt. Kim corroborates these findings with evidence from various sources, citing the observation made in connection to *hansi* Chinese poems that weaker groups tend to have bigger flexibility in their syllable count – a rule which he shows to apply to a selection of the *sijo* analysed by McCann. Moreover, he opines that stronger and weaker groups would be reflected in performance and recitation, and, again, comparison with the melodic contour of sung *sijo* and the speech melody of recited *sijo* shows that the strongest and weakest groups tend to fall on the highest and lowest pitches in each respectively. However, his argument is somewhat weakened by the fact that the original musical setting for most of the *sijo* analysed by McCann is unknown, or according to musicologists would have more likely been *kagok* rather than *sijo*, so if the argument is to have validity, the same correlation between pitch and metrical accent must be shown in the *kagok* musical setting. Further weakening his argument is the fact that in the *sijo* musical setting, syllables are drawn out melodically with the proclaimed highest pitches occurring only momentarily as ornamental *cambiata*, which makes it tenuous to speak of entire syllable groups as coinciding with the highest pitch. As for the analysis of recited *sijo*, it is unclear where the speech model graphs were taken from and whether these will be uniform in all contexts as there is no standardized model of *sijo* recitation.

### 1.3 Introduction to *chōngga*

Sung *sijo* reached their peak as one of the favourite musical styles of Seoul's middle class in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, towards the end of Chosŏn dynasty, alongside other genres that fell mostly within what is today seen as the *chōngak* category, but also including *chapka* mixed songs. Usage of the word *chōngak*<sup>29</sup> is ambiguous. In a wider sense, *chōngak* is used in accordance with social strata and can be seen as including all court music, the music of nobility and literati, in contrast to *minsogak*,

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<sup>28</sup> This analysis is limited to the first two *chang*, whereas the final *chang* is explained slightly differently; for present purposes I will limit myself to saying that his analysis is based on the assumption of the final *chang* as a reduction of the last two lines of the Chinese quatrain and therefore as having a total of five syllable groups.

<sup>29</sup> 正樂 – correct – music = “right/correct/proper music”.

a term under which the various forms of folk music are subsumed. While this classification provides a handy division of Korean traditional music into court and folk, it oversimplifies matters since it does not distinguish between upper and middle class (and also simplifies the concept of folk music, failing to separate professional urban genres from local, rural, forms). *Chŏngak* started to be used in its narrower sense as the term for a specific repertoire with the establishment of the Korean Court Music Study Institute (*Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpso*) in 1911 and henceforth referred to the three vocal genres *kagok*, *kasa* and *sijo*, and the different versions of the instrumental suite *Yŏngsan hoesang* also known as *p'ungnyu*. The literal meaning of the word *chŏngak* denotes its opposition to folk music which aristocrats and literati considered vulgar and as having a negative influence on the mind, regarding it not as proper music.

*Sijo* are usually grouped together with and are closely related to the two genres of *kagok* and *kasa* with which they share a number of similarities. Together, the three are subsumed under the term *chŏngga*<sup>30</sup> – in English sometimes rendered as “Korean classical vocal music” – and constitute the totality of vocal forms within Korea’s *chŏngak* tradition. Contemporary professional singers of *chŏngak* are usually able to perform all three genres, unlike the professional end of folk musical vocal genres which necessitate a different type of training.

The repertoire of *kagok* is a song cycle consisting of repertoires for male voice, female voice and mixed repertoire. *Kagok* developed towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century from a song called *Saktaeyŏp*. Along with two slower versions which fell into disuse, *Saktaeyŏp* constituted the first amply documented musical setting for *sijo* texts, and the use of these is an important characteristic of the *kagok* repertoire. The music is mostly slow and the singing has a strong melisma.

*Sijo* also adapts *sijo* poems as its lyrics, but the musical style is different and more stripped-down. The pieces are shorter and the sung melodies simpler. Whereas *kagok* sets the three lines of poetry to five musical sections with an interlude and a postlude, in *sijo* singing each line of the

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<sup>30</sup> 正歌 – correct – song = “proper song”.

text corresponds to one section of music. The repertoire of the twelve *kasa* has been noted to carry elements of folksong; there are great divergences between the individual songs in terms of musical style, origin and text type, to the point that the term *kasa* defines a repertoire rather than a genre.

For the most part, these musical genres are sung with an accompaniment which is fixed in the case of *kagok*, but not for *sijo* and *kasa*. *Kagok* employs the biggest ensemble, and extant sources document scores for all the standard instruments. *Sijo*, in comparison, can be accompanied with only a *changgo* hourglass drum, but other instruments may be added which then mirror the vocal melody. Greater freedom exists for *kasa* accompaniment, which can range from a *capella* performance (which is unusual nowadays) to ensembles including drums and up to four musicians on wind instruments. As with *sijo*, instruments mirror the sung melody, an accompanying style called *susŏng karak* (following melody), but this is harder in the case of *kasa* since each piece is different, so the players have to be familiar with the melody and the singer's interpretation.

Given the slow articulation of the text in all three genres, vowels that extend for several beats are not just sustained, but are elongated through the insertion of extra vowels, especially in the case of diphthongs which are sung as separate entities that slowly morph into each other (the procedure is explained in further detail in, for example, Um Hae-kyung 2007:37).

Finally, another genre that is sometimes subsumed in the *chŏngga* category (and, for example, taught next to the others in university courses on *chŏngga*) is *sich'ang*. *Sich'ang* refers to the musical adaptation of *hansi* Chinese poems; this is a marked contrast from the other genres which adapt texts in vernacular Korean. *Sich'ang* has come down to the present as an entirely oral tradition; no premodern document exists (see Kim Young-Woon (2005) for an analysis of the similarities and differences between *sijo* and *sich'ang*).

#### 1.4 The musical form of *sijo*

In this section I discuss mode, *changdan* rhythmic cycles, *sigimsae* ornamentation and *paeja* word-*changdan* relationship as the parameters constitutive of *sijo* as a musical form, and describe how they are modulated in the different variants of *sijo*, as well as how they compare to *kagok*, the only other extant musical setting for *sijo* texts. For illustration, I include a transcription of the first section of the *sijo* *T'aesani* in Western notation by Moon Hyun (Example 1.1) and the same song in *chŏngganbo* mensural notation (Example 1.2),<sup>31</sup> as transcribed by Yi Yang-gyo and used in Moon Hyun's *sijo* classes.

평시조 태산이 높다하되

채보문현

태사 - 1. 이 높다 허 도 | 하 느 - - - - - 리 | 뤼 | 로 다

Example 1.1: The first section of the *sijo* *T'aesani* in Western notation

<sup>31</sup> This is read downwards from the top, from right to left. The column at the very right that contains circles and lines indicates the drum strokes that form the *changdan* on the *changgo* hourglass drum; since they repeat throughout, they are indicated only once, but apply to all the boxes to their left. In *murŭp* (knee) *changdan*, a way to tap out the cycles on one's knees which is the style of *changdan* every *chŏngga* singer learns, the black-and-white circle refers to a stroke with both hands, the black circle a stroke by the left, and the line a stroke by the right hand. The circle with two lines symbolizes a rest which the singer represents through a tap of the right index finger to keep the time. Each box in the other columns to the left represents one beat, and is subdivided into three metric units. The notes are indicated in the boxes by their names in Sino-Korean characters, the triple subdivisions of each beat are approximated through the lines in the box, so a character followed by two lines means that the note should start on the first of the three subdivisions of the beat and so on. Ornaments are indicated through symbols such as wiggly lines in the boxes, the wedge-shaped symbols at the right-hand side of the boxes mark the places in which the singer is supposed to inhale. A triangle in a box tells the singer to rest. Finally, the song text is indicated once above the score and again to the right of the boxes in Korean script, including elongation vowels.

一分二四并（拍七）  
李良教編二空半

하늘 아래

외이로다

노르고다노르말

못노를이

어젯밤은

사람이 제아니 부르고

모를 놀나 하드라

장중										장초										
黄仲	외르	林仲	사	仲	어	※평시조의 창법은 태산이 의보로 동을 하며 대 동속이하 以下 同					仲仲	모르	黄仲	외이	仲仲					
		漢	하	仲太黃	바거										태사					
林仲	노	漢	라		마	仲仲仲仲仲					고	林仲	로	이						
仲		仲林	이	黄仲		仲仲仲仲仲						仲太黃		仲太黃						
		仲		仲		仲仲仲仲仲						仲		仲						
林太黃	다	仲仲仲	제아	仲	노	仲					또	仲	다	仲仲	하노	黄仲				
		仲仲	니			仲太黃										노다				
※仲太黃을 仲黃으로 하여도 좋다 以下		林仲																		
		仲黃	오르	林太黃	餘音五拍						林仲				하					
		仲													하노					
		太黃	하고												하노					
		黃													하노					
		仲													하노					
		林	上												하노					

Sijo uses the *kyemyŏnjo* mode, which consists of the three notes *hwangjong*, *chungnyŏ* and *imjong* corresponding to Eb, Ab and Bb in the contemporary Western pitch system. As *imjong* appears exclusively as an appoggiatura to *chungnyŏ*, it is sometimes considered a mere ornamental note not constitutive of melody, especially since the interval between the two is smaller than the diatonic interval of the major second (the exact pitching of all notes, however, varies between singers). The tempo of sijo is extremely slow, equivalent of roughly 30 bpm, but this meter is stretched in places, so the rhythm is not based on a continuous sense of pulse.

Two *changdan* rhythm cycles of five and eight beats, respectively, are employed in sijo in the following sequence:

Section 1: 5+8+8+5+8

Section 2: 5+8+8+5+8

Section 3: 5+8+5+8

In practice, the last *changdan* cycle ends after the first beat (the downbeat). In the notation, the *changdan* are represented by the boxes at the right, containing circles and lines which represent the strokes on the *changgo* hourglass drum. Unlike in *kagok*, no instrumentation is prescribed in sijo, and indeed the singer can sing without any accompaniment at all or keep the time through what is called *murŭp* (knee) *changdan*, a method typically employed in teaching as well, in which the singer taps out the rhythmic cycles on his knees while singing; undoubtedly, the *changdan* are essential to keep in mind as the structural skeleton of the song. In performance, a *changgo* is often added; further, in a concert setting, *p'iri* (oboe), *baegŭm* (two-stringed fiddle), *taegŭm* (transverse bamboo flute), and *tanso* (vertical notched flute) may be added. The melody instruments accompany the singer by loosely mirroring the vocal melody in a style of accompaniment called *susŏng karak* (following melody).

Korean musical concepts distinguish a number of fine nuances in vocal style which I will briefly summarize here. The importance of vibrato partly lies in its significance in defining a piece's mode, since the ways of executing vibrato are linked to definite steps within each mode

and as such constitute an important characteristic thereof. Among the techniques used we can first distinguish *yosŏng* (shaking sound), the main type of vibrato which is applied mainly on a mode's central tone, in this case *bwangjong*. The *aak* court ritual musical style of *yosŏng* in which the vibrato starts out small and increases in intensity after the length of one beat has to be distinguished from folk music-like *yosŏng* which starts out strong and remains steady. Another type of vibrato is *ch'ŏnsŏng* (rolling sound), a short vibrato that lasts for less than a beat. Finally, *l'oesŏng* (receding sound) describes a type of appoggiatura or downward glissando-like effect, depending on the number of steps by which the pitch "recedes" downward; both of these fall mainly on *imjong* in *sijo*. These are just the most general features of ornamentation in *sijo*; a range of other ornaments is used, but these vary from singer to singer and are not standardized.<sup>1</sup>

*Paeja* refers to the way the syllables are set against the *changdan*; this relationship is perceived as structurally important and deviated little from. At the most general level, syllables in *sijo* are set against the *changdan* so that each section of the *sijo* text corresponds to one musical section. These sections are marked by *yŏŭm* improvisatory instrumental postludes – except for the last section which ends abruptly and cuts short the last syllable group of the *sijo* text which is invariably dispensable in conveying the meaning of the text. Beyond this general correspondence, one syllable group (which, as discussed above, tends to consist of 3-4 syllables) is generally matched with one *changdan*, except in the last *changdan* of each section: In the first two sections, the last syllable of the preceding syllable group is drawn out for several beats at the beginning of the final *changdan*, similar to a final note common in Western classical music, whereas in the last section the last syllable of the preceding syllable group coincides with the abrupt ending on the first beat of the final *changdan*. Moon Hyun further observes that the way individual syllables within a syllable group are distributed in a *changdan* suggests a subdivision of the *changdan* as follows:

5-beat *changdan*: 2+3

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of *sijo*'s melodic outline, including dynamics and ornamentation, is given in Lee Hye-ku (1983:55-63). A typology and analysis of *sijo* ornaments is also one of the parts of Donna Lee Kwon's 1995 master's thesis *Sijo-Ch'ang: The Aesthetic of Restraint and Difference in Korean Vocal Production*.



8-beat *changdan*: 3+2+3

To be precise, these subdivisions point to the fact that syllables carrying meaning – as opposed to elongation vowels – most often fall on the first beat of these subdivisions, that is, on the first and third beat in a 5-beat *changdan*, and on the first, fourth or sixth beat in an 8-beat *changdan*.<sup>2</sup>

Everything discussed so far refers to the *p'yŏng* sijo; while the term has been discussed above with regard to the different literary forms as a synonym of *tanhyŏng* sijo, in a musical context it refers to the standard form of sijo with the characteristics outlined so far. Where no specification is made, the term sijo in a musical context refers to the *p'yŏng* sijo, and the *p'yŏng* is added only to distinguish it from a number of other musical sijo types that I will now discuss. Other types of sijo exhibit distinct characteristics in which they differ from the *p'yŏng* sijo, for example in the type of sijo text used, the melodic outline, vocal technique, and so on. To avoid confusion between literary and musical terminology, I will in this section refer to the three literary forms of sijo discussed above by the terms *tanhyŏng*, *chunghyŏng* and *changhyŏng* sijo – as these are reserved for discussions of the sijo text – instead of *p'yŏng*, *ŏt* and *sasŏl* sijo, the first and last of which have currency as descriptions of musical form as well.

Next to *p'yŏng* sijo, the main two types which every *chŏngga* singer is expected to be able to sing are *sasŏl* and *chirŭm* sijo; in regional sijo styles, only *p'yŏng* and *sasŏl* sijo are commonly found, whereas other types are for the most part limited to *kyŏngje*,<sup>3</sup> the sijo style found in the region around Seoul (see also Chapter 6.3). *Sasŏl* sijo uses the same musical framework as *p'yŏng* sijo, but adapts sijo texts which are in the literary form of the *changhyŏng* sijo (see p. 30). As these have many more syllables, the extreme melisma typical in *p'yŏng* sijo is less pronounced and more than four syllables can be set to a single beat in the framework of the *changdan*. *Chirŭm* sijo is subdivided into male (*namch'ang*) and female (*yŏch'ang*) sijo which are really two distinct categories, as the melodic outline in them is different and, unlike the subdivisions suggest, both are sung by

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<sup>2</sup> From an undated short article on sijo, titled 'Sijo ūi arūmdaum', p.12. The sijo notation of *T'aesani* included here is not a good example of Moon's first point, as in the six 5-beat *changdan* of the song, five times a syllable that carries meaning coincides with the fourth rather than the third beat.

<sup>3</sup> 京制 – capital – make.

men and women alike. The middle and final sections of both are the same as in *p'yŏng* sijo and only the first section exhibits differences. The differences are as follows: in male *chirŭm* sijo, the singer starts in a high register, singing in a powerful and yelling vocal style, markedly distinct from that used in *p'yŏng* sijo, throughout the first three *changdan*. In female *chirŭm* sijo, the singer starts as in *p'yŏng* sijo, but switches to a higher register in some parts of the first section; however, these higher parts are sung in a falsetto voice rather than the yelling style of male *chirŭm* sijo.

The following sijo types are subtypes of these three main categories. *Chunghŏri* sijo is seen as a subcategory of *p'yŏng* sijo; it employs falsetto singing halfway through the first section and uses texts in the standard *tanhyŏng* sijo form. Sijo subtypes in the *chirŭm* sijo group are especially numerous. *Sasŏl chirŭm* sijo is particularly flexible in its musical structure: As the name suggests, it uses *changhyŏng* sijo texts and starts out like a male *chirŭm* sijo. Unlike regular *sasŏl* sijo, however, melody and even *changdan* are adjusted to each individual sijo text, so the interchanging of texts is difficult and each separate sijo has to be learned like a new song; there are around 20 songs in the *sasŏl chirŭm* sijo repertoire. *Sujapka* is subsumed in the *sasŏl chirŭm* sijo category and is a synonym of the following terms which are those preferred by individual singers: *yŏkkŭm chirŭm* sijo, *sasŏl yŏkkŭm chirŭm* sijo and *hwimori* sijo. This group can be described as a type of *sasŏl chirŭm* sijo in which melody and *changdan* change at the end of the first and in the second section, picking up speed and thereby becoming more folk-like in character; two songs of this kind are extant. Finally, *on chirŭm* sijo are a more recent addition to the sijo repertoire. They are like male *chirŭm* sijo, but the high register and the yelling singing style is maintained throughout the entire song; the texts employed here are *tanhyŏng* sijo.

In the subcategory of *sasŏl*-sijo-related forms, the only type is the *pansasŏl* sijo, also called *pan'gak* sijo. Given that it is distinguished by use of the literary type of *chunghyŏng* (or *ŏt* sijo), this grouping may seem surprising. But, then again, and as I have discussed above, the distinction between *chunghyŏng* and *changhyŏng* sijo as literary forms is a matter of debate, so the limits are not as clearly drawn in the musical realm. Accordingly, the extended text of *pansasŏl* sijo is perceived

as being closest to *sasŏl* sijo. In *pansasŏl* sijo, the individual musical sections resemble *p'yŏng* or *sasŏl* sijo, depending on which section of the text is extended.

Finally, other less widespread sijo forms exist, particularly two types which shift the song's modal setting to *kagok*-style *ujo* instead of *kyemyŏnjo*:<sup>4</sup> *Ujo* sijo, the first of these, is similar to *p'yŏng* sijo in other respects. However, unlike in *p'yŏng* sijo, texts are not commonly exchanged in *ujo* sijo, but instead the repertoire is limited to a number of texts already established as *ujo* sijo texts. Going on, *ujo chirŭm* sijo are like *ujo* sijo, but employ the high register and yelling voice typical of male *chirŭm* sijo. Finally, *kak* sijo are similar to *sasŏl chirŭm* sijo in their adjustment of melody and *changdan* to the text, but do not feature the yelling voice in the first section, but will sometimes incorporate it in the middle of the second. Intriguingly, the last two types that I have introduced here – *ujo chirŭm* sijo and *kak* sijo – do not actually adapt sijo texts, but incorporate seven-syllable *hansi* poems in Chinese, so their classification as sijo rather than the above-mentioned *sich'ang* can appear inconsistent. The cohesion to the canon of sijo songs is, in this case, warranted only through the music, not in respect to the text. These last examples, in particular, demonstrate that *kagae*, the professional singers in Chosŏn times, were musicians rather than theoreticians and actively engaged in the broadening of their repertoires, creating new and often overlapping designations from scratch, and stretching the boundaries of a demarcated canon. Furthermore, the correspondence between formal characteristics in these sijo variants and songs in the *kagok* repertoire makes it likely that such variants in sijo were either influenced by *kagok*, or that both were developed in tandem by *kagae* singers who sang both genres.

Note that although a range of additional sijo variants, as well as additional, overlapping designations, existed in the past, and different terms are preferred by different singers, especially those of distinct teaching lineages, scholars have in recent times attempted to systematize all diverging designations found in notation books from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Shin Woong-Soon 2006), as well as in different regional styles (Moon Hyun 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the *ujo* mode in *kagok*, see Lee Hye-ku (1983:71-84).

With this discussion of *sijo* as the musical setting of *sijo* poems completed, I can now turn to a discussion of the musical setting of *kagok*. Next to songs in *kyemyŏnjo* mode, the *kagok* repertoire also contains a smaller number of songs which are in the five-note *ujo* mode; this mode contains the additional notes *taejū* (F) and *namnyŏ* (C). A sixteen-beat *changdan* is employed in slower pieces, and a 10-beat *changdan* in faster pieces of the repertoire. The first of these is subdivided into units of 11 and 5 beats, the second into units of 7 and 3 beats. Unlike *sijo*, *kagok* sets the three lines of a *sijo* text to five musical sections. A tuning piece, *tasŭrŭm*, is played at the beginning and before the first song in a new mode, an instrumental interlude *chungyŏm* is inserted between the third and fourth musical sections (the second and third lines of the *sijo* text), and an instrumental postlude, *taeyŏm*, is given after the final musical section. In fitting the text to the five musical sections, the first line is broken up along the breath group division into two musical sections, the second line is maintained as one musical section, and the third line is broken up after the first syllable group to form sections four and five. In *Ujo ch'osudaeyŏp*, the first piece of the *kagok* cycle, this renders the following *changdan* beat pattern for the musical sections (matched, to the right, with the corresponding length of the *sijo* text):

Section 1: 16+16 (=32)	2 syllable groups of 3-4 syllables
Section 2: 16+11 (=27)	2 syllable groups of 3-4 syllables
Section 3: 5+16+16 (=37)	4 syllable groups of 3-4 syllables
Interlude: 16	-
Section 4: 16+11 (=27)	1 syllable group of 3 syllables
Section 5: 5+16+16+11 (=48)	3 syllable groups of ~5, 4 and 3 syllables
Postlude: 5+16+16+16 (=53)	-

In general, the *paeja* in *kagok* is much more irregular than in *sijo*, where the syllable groups are mostly matched with the *changdan*. In *kagok*, the syllable groups are distributed unevenly and are dramatically different in length: The first two syllable groups of the text (which correspond to Section 1), for example, extend for 11 and 21 beats, respectively. Still, in the overview above, a

general correspondence in the proportions between the beat-length of the musical sections and the text sections can be noted.

*Kagok* pieces that use *changhyŏng* sijo texts assign all extended sections of the text to the musical sections 3 and 5; the musical sections 1, 2 and 4, however, maintain their standard text length. There is, then, another way the overview above can be organized, namely, by showing the beat-length correspondence to each part of the sijo's sense structure in the sijo text. This would look as follows:

1. Stating of the theme: 59 beats accompany ~15 syllables = average of ~4 beats per syllable
2. Development of the theme: 37 beats accompany ~15 syllables = average of ~2,5 beats per syllable
3. Anti-theme or twist: 27 beats accompany 3 syllables = average of 9 beats per syllable
4. Conclusion: 48 beats accompany ~12 syllables = average of 4 beats per syllable

With this new arrangement and the information on the syllable distribution in *sasŏl* sijo, the following becomes evident: the different parts of the sijo text's sense structure are represented very unevenly in terms of their length – and in a *sasŏl* sijo even more syllables would be crammed into 'development of the theme' (2) and 'conclusion' (4). Accordingly, the structural integrity of the other parts of the sense structure – 'stating of the theme' (1) and 'anti-theme or twist' (3) – appears to be most important.

## **Chapter 2. The origins of sijo**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the origin of sijo, based on debates around the existing documentation and on theories proposed by various scholars. The discussion around origin is important in order to understand the different approaches and ways to frame the genre nowadays. I look at writings from both studies of literature and musicology, and present their findings, at times in parallel, but together where they cross. Since sijo texts were recorded in very different sources than the sources of sijo notations, scholars have been able to discuss the topic in two separate strands. Misunderstandings sometimes arise when scholars overstep their personal sphere of authority, hence, to give one example, notation books can and have been indiscriminately mixed into lists of poetry collections. In the first section of what follows, I explain the terminology around sijo as concerns its meaning and etymology, as well as other terms used to refer to sijo as either text or music in the past. My second section introduces the types of extant documentation from which information on sijo can be sourced, giving a short overview of the sources – mostly poem anthologies and notation books – that are relevant. The third section discusses the debates about the time of origin of the first sijo texts, and the difficulties in ascertaining their proper attribution to an author. Finally, my last two sections survey a number of conjectured points of origin for sijo as having stemmed from previous forms; for ease of reading, I discuss these separately in respect to literary and musical forms, although some overlap is inevitable.

### **2.1 The terminology around sijo**

Widespread and standardized use of the term *sijo* coincides with *sijo*'s framing as a literary genre in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Chapter 1.1). Previously, the term *sijo* would have referred to sung *sijo*; Cho Kyu-Ick writes:

The observation by [Yi Pyönggi] that there is no example anywhere in a classical document of the fixed, native Korean poetic form that we call *sijo* (around 3 sections, 6 phrases, and 45 syllables) today itself being referred to as *sijo*, is valid and important (1994:424).

Musicians in the past, especially before the spread of print technology, did not concern themselves much with genre designations and being consistent in their use of terminology.<sup>1</sup> The same is true for *sijo* where, due to a lack of classificatory efforts during Chosön times, a number of sometimes similar terms were in use.

Scholars agree that the first documented use of the term '*sijo*' is in the *Kwansö akpu*,<sup>2</sup> the tenth volume of *Sökpukchip* (1774),<sup>3</sup> a collection of Sin Kwangsu's (1712-1775) writings. The reference is to song, and states that: "*Sijo* is a song sung to *changdan*, this goes back to Yi Sech'un from Changan" (Shin Woong-Soon 2006:5). This passage has been given various interpretations, the most common one of which, endorsed by the majority of commentators, is that Yi Sech'un (dates unknown) created what we see as sung *sijo* today. If we accept this explanation, we are still left wondering if the statement focusses on what was before, or what has been after Yi Sech'un. Does the novelty lie in that he was the first to sing *sijo* texts in a new way (which was not *kagok*), or in the fact that he was the first to sing *sijo* in the style that the reader is surmised to know as *sijo*? Either the fact is highlighted that someone sang *sijo* texts to a new, heretofore unknown

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<sup>1</sup> In Western classical music, the terminology for musical forms is similarly inconsistent both across the centuries – for example if we think of the changing meanings of a term like 'sinfonia' – and even within one era. An example of this from the Baroque tradition are terms such as 'fantasia', 'prelude' and 'toccata', or 'passacaglia' and 'chaconne', among others, which were not clearly defined, sometimes applied interchangeably and used inconsistently (see, for example, Schweitzer 1977:248). In fact, even some of the most representative pieces in a category can contradict the criteria established through abstraction from the majority of works. For example, the structural balance, motivic work and imitatory style in Johann Sebastian Bach's famous 'Dorian Toccata' (BWV538) defies the toccata category's common definition as a piece in a loose, improvisatory manner.

<sup>2</sup> 關西樂府 – Kwansö (former name of Pyöngan Province in what is now North Korea) – music – bureau = "Kwansö *akpu*" (*akpu* are a type of Chinese poem, known in Chinese as *yuefu*).

<sup>3</sup> 石北集 – stone – north – collect = "The collected writings of Sökpuk" (Sin Kwangsu's pen name: "Northern Stone").

melody, or the reader was assumed to know the subject at hand. It is interesting, then, not that someone sang sijo texts in a new way, for others besides *kagok* could have existed, but because it would come to mean something like “this is the origin of the sijo we know today”.

An alternative interpretation endorsed, for example, by Kim Taehaeng (1986:31-33), suggests that Yi Sech'un was not the creator of sijo, but that he merely added *changdan* to sijo as an already existing genre. Sceptics hold that this does not prove the creation of the musical sijo form we know today:

When it is mentioned that he arranged<sup>4</sup> *changdan* to sijo, it must certainly mean that he beat *changdan* to the sijo melody. There is no word on whether it was in three or five sections or whatever. [...] The term sijo appearing in the above poem [with the part about Yi Sech'un] cannot be said to be today's sung sijo either. There is no concrete proof (Shin Woong-Soon 2006:5).

There is further source, though, in the poem collection *Akhak sŭmnyŏng*,<sup>5</sup> compiled in 1713 by Yi Hyŏngsang (1653-1733), which according to Shin Woong-Soon mentions the term ‘sijo’ (2006:1-3) – this would make it an older appearance of the term. However, the dating of the volume is disputed, as it contains sijo texts by writers who lived during king Yŏngjo's reign (1724-1776), so it is assumed to have been published later than the poem collection *Haedong kayo* from 1769. An alternative explanation suggests that the extant document is Yi Hyŏngsang's original manuscript revised by later authors, as there are parts that are not in his handwriting.<sup>6</sup> If most of the *Akhak sŭmnyŏng*'s content, indeed, dates back to 1713, it would be the first sijo anthology and the first recorded use of the term ‘sijo’.

Generally, though, the *Sŏkpukchip* is held by scholars as the first proof of not only the existence of the term ‘sijo’, but as the origination of sung sijo, despite the warnings of commentators such as Shin Woong-Soon about concluding that the sijo referred to in the

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<sup>4</sup> The character used is *pae* (排 – push open), short for *paeyŏl* (排列 – push open – arrange) which in this combination is used synonymously with *paeyŏl* (配列 – divide – arrange = “arrange”).

<sup>5</sup> 樂學拾零 – music – study – gather – rain/age; no source suggests an interpretation of this character combination.

<sup>6</sup> Kwon Yŏngch'ŏl, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘Akhak sŭmnyŏng’.



*Sŏkpukchip* is the *sijo* we know today. A passage in the *Sesi p'ungyo*<sup>7</sup> by Yu Man'gong (1793-1879), dated to 1843, is the first unanimous proof of *sijo* in its current form, as the passage makes explicit mention of the three-section form (Chang Sa-Hun 1986:15, Kim Taehaeng 1986:33); the term used to refer to this form in the 1843 text, however, is *sijŏl tan'ga*.

Of the Sino-Korean characters used for the term 'sijo' nowadays,<sup>8</sup> the first character means 'time/opportunity/moment', while the meaning 'melody' is usually advocated for the second one, although the character can mean a number of things. There are different interpretations for this combination, and it is best seen as a general description – “contemporary song” (Donna Kwon 1995:17, Park Sung-Hee 2011:145) – or as referring to the content of many *sijo* texts – “song that talks about the seasons”. Park Sung-Hee cites another possibility: “a song made up on the spot”, pointing to historical descriptions of something like the improvisation of *sijo* texts (2011:145, see also Rutt 1998:9). In an interview with me on 19 August 2015 at the Gugak National High School, *kagok* singer Yi Sŏngyun supplied her personal interpretation of *sijo*'s two characters, as making reference to the diversity of available *sijo* texts and forms, which makes sure that there is an appropriate *sijo* for any given moment:

*Sijo*, on the other hand, is the “song of the moment”; it combines *si* for time and *cho* for melody.

When interpreted like that, the moment or occasion in question can be sad or merry, but just as well an occasion related to the four seasons; so what we call the occasion, what we call the time takes manifold forms. So today I am not in the mood to sit very quietly and sing this song; and then I want to be sighing. When that happens, *sijo* really does have this melancholy side to it, there is a song for that purpose. Maybe today I am in such a great mood that I want to be yelling [and there is an appropriate song for that, too].

Among the terms used in classical times to refer to *sijo*, we can distinguish between those that refer to the texts and those that refer to the musical form. As I have established, the term *sijo* was

<sup>7</sup> 歲時風謠 – year – season – custom – song = “Songs of Seasonal Customs”; after Park Sung-Hee 2011:147.

<sup>8</sup> 時調.

used to refer to the music, but it was not the only term used. Terminology was unified for neither the literary nor the musical form in classical documents. The musical form, then, was referred to sometimes as *sijo*, but in other places as *sijöl tan'ga*, *sijölga*, *sijölgajo*, *sinbön*, *sinsöng*, *sinjo*, and *sin'gok*,<sup>9</sup> the etymology of those terms starting in *sijöl* (time, era, season) suggests that the *si* in *sijo* is an abbreviation, and that the corresponding interpretation of the term 'sijo' as something like "seasonal tune" is correct. Before orthography was standardized, spellings for *sijo* varied, even in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so *sijo* sometimes appeared as *sijyu* or *sijyu kallak*,<sup>10</sup> and in his overview of sung *sijo* types, Shin Woong-Soon (2006) lists the ways they were referred to in notation books and tries to classify them according to a set of imposed criteria as *p'yöng*, *chirüm* or *sasöl sijo*.

Terms used in the past to refer to *sijo* texts are *tan'ga*, *sinbön*, *changdan'ga*, *sinjo*, and *sijö*<sup>11</sup> (O'Rourke 2002:2). While the character *ka/-ga* (song) in terms like *tan'ga* and *changdan'ga* suggests that *sijo* texts were widely thought of as song texts, these terms are mostly taken from poem collections published when *sijo* texts were already being sung to the *sijo* form. According to Rutt, the first use of the term 'sijo' to refer exclusively to *sijo* texts was in Ch'oe Namsön's (1890-1957) 1913 collection *Kagok-sön* (1998: xxi).

Finally, Cho Kyu-Ick (1994) suggests that the common usage of the term 'sijo' for *sijo* texts nowadays is mistaken; according to him, the term *kasa*<sup>12</sup> is the accurate term for all Korean vernacular poetry, reflecting their shared condition of being, in fact, song texts, and *sijo* specifically should more accurately be referred to as *kagok ch'angsa* (*kagok* lyrics),<sup>13</sup> since they were

<sup>9</sup> 時節短歌 – season (two characters) – short – song, 時節歌 – season (two characters) – song, 時節歌調 – season (two characters) – song – melody, 新翻 – new – translate, 新聲 – new – sound, 新調 – new – melody, 新曲 – new – song.

<sup>10</sup> In *han'gül*: 시쥬 and 시쥬 갈락.

<sup>11</sup> 短歌 – short – song, 新翻 – new – translate, 長短歌 – long – short – song, 新調 – new – melody, 時餘 – time – be left over. O'Rourke, who does not give a source or Sino-Korean characters for these terms, may be mistaken to list the last one as *siyo* (*shiyo*) rather than *sijö*. He likely arrived at the term from the title of a *sijo* anthology that I mention in the next section which he likewise lists as *Siyo* (*Shiyo*; 2002:8). A comparison with Kim Taehaeng (1986:331), however, shows the collection is called *Sijö* (時餘), unless there is an alternate variant for the second character's pronunciation that I am not aware of.

<sup>12</sup> 歌詞 – song – text, not to be confused with the poetry genre of the same name which is spelled 歌辭.

<sup>13</sup> 歌曲唱詞 – song – song – sing – text.

originally conceived of as texts to be sung to *kagok*. He argues that the umbrella term ‘*kasa*’ distinguishes these texts and the other types of vernacular Korean poetry all of which were sung, from the second tradition found in Korea during Chosŏn times: the *bansi* tradition of poems in Chinese. Some Korean literature scholars have not taken kindly to his argument: Peter H. Lee called it “bravado and overheated” (2003:303; see also O’Rourke 2003). However, following Cho’s lead, the singer and scholar Moon Hyun explains his use of the term *sijoch’angsa*<sup>14</sup> in a recent paper:

Originally, *sijo* was ‘poetry and music’,<sup>15</sup> being a genre that encompassed literature and music. Yet, according to Pae Ŭnhŭi’s [doctoral research], it was owing to the beginning of serious studies in modern literature in the 1920s that the lyrics for *kagok* and sung *sijo* were incorporated into the field of poetry under the genre name ‘*sijo*’ and came to be seen as ‘poetry to be written and contemplated’. In the present paper, I will for the sake of convenience use the term ‘*sijoch’ang*’ whenever *sijo* is mentioned with a focus on its musical aspects, and the term ‘*sijoch’angsa*’ [*sijo* lyrics] when focussing on literary aspects. This terminology around ‘*sijoch’angsa*’ follows Cho Kyu-Ik’s views in *Kagok ch’angsa ūi kungmunhakchŏk ponjil*; where *kagok* texts use a specific *sijo* poem as lyrics, he uses ‘*kagokch’angsa*’ in opposition to ‘*sijoch’angsa*’ (2015:31).

As I have hopefully demonstrated, the debate around the *sijo* terminology is complicated by problems with the correct dating of documents, and the distinctions between present and past usage of terms.

## 2.2 Historical sources on *sijo*

Our knowledge of *sijo* in Chosŏn times – ignoring the terminology used to refer to them – is based chiefly on three different types of sources: private collections (*munjip*), *sijo* anthologies (*kajip*) and notation books (*koakpo*). An exception are the wooden printing blocks containing Yi

<sup>14</sup> 時調唱詞 – time – melody – sing – text.

<sup>15</sup> *Siga* 詩歌.

Hwang's (pen name T'oegye, 1501-1570) cycle *Twelve Songs of Tosan*, that constitute the oldest written source of a sijo text (1565) and are believed to be based on his own handwriting.

Private collections contain the entire writings, often including sijo, of one scholar and were usually published posthumously. Two examples of collections by notable sijo authors are *Songgang kasa*<sup>16</sup> (first published in 1690), containing the works of Chŏng Ch'öl (1536-1593), and *Kosan chip*<sup>17</sup> (1791), containing the works of Yun Sŏndo (1587-1671). Whenever later poem anthologies attribute sijo texts to an author that do not appear in that author's collected works, such attributions may be considered as doubtful.

The existence of sijo anthologies (*kajip*), also referred to as song collections or songbooks, is documented from 1728 onwards. They contain sijo texts by different writers for the purpose of singing. Authors are given where known, although the attribution of poems is more doubtful compared to private collections, hence Rutt calls such anthologies the "crystallizing of oral tradition" (1998:158). The three most famous anthologies of this type are *Chŏnggu yŏngŏm*<sup>18</sup> (first published in 1728), *Haedong kayo*<sup>19</sup> (1769) and *Kagok wŏllyu*<sup>20</sup> (1876) which contain 580, 586/638<sup>21</sup> and 660 sijo respectively. Although a great number of often similarly titled anthologies exist, these three are considered the most representative in terms of quality and scope; the *Akbak sŏmnyŏng*, possibly the oldest sijo collection, has been discussed above. Other anthologies are interesting for the poems contained that do not appear elsewhere and for comparative purposes when they offer new variants of poems extant in other sources (1998:160). Poems in the anthologies are mostly grouped according to the melody that they were sung to and, within these groups, according to topic. Most of the known anthologies were meant to provide texts for the

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<sup>16</sup> 松江歌辭 – pine tree – river – song – spoken words = "Songgang's *kasa*" ('Songgang' was Chŏng Ch'öl's pen name: 'Pine River'; *kasa* with these characters refers to a different type of vernacular poetry).

<sup>17</sup> 孤山集 – lone – mountain – collect = "Kosan's works" ('Kosan' was Yun Sŏndo's pen name: 'Lone Mountain').

<sup>18</sup> 靑丘永言 – green – hill – long/chant – word = "Long-drawn-out words of the Green Hills". Rutt explains: "Long-drawn-out –i.e., chanted—words is a quotation from the *Shu ching*, the Chinese *Book of Documents*, and means songs; Green Hills is an ancient Chinese name for a fairyland in the eastern sea which has become a sobriquet for Korea. The name therefore means simply 'Korean Songs'" (1998:158).

<sup>19</sup> 海東歌謠 – sea – east – song – song = "Songs from the Eastern Sea")

<sup>20</sup> 歌曲源流 – song – song – origin – flow = "Source and Flow of Songs"; anthology names after Rutt 1998:158.

<sup>21</sup> Two versions exist of the *Haedong kayo*.

performance of *kagok*, but the following are believed to be anthologies compiled especially for *sijo*, as the texts omit the last phrase as is customary in *sijo* performance: *Sijo kwansöbon*,<sup>22</sup> *Sijo kasa*,<sup>23</sup> *P'unga*<sup>24</sup> (published around 1858), *Siyö, Nambun t'aep'yöngga*<sup>25</sup> (published in 1863), *Sich'ölga* (1887) and *Cho mit sa*,<sup>26</sup> only the author of *P'unga*, Yi Sebo (1832-1895), is known (Cho Kyu-Ick 1994:57, Kim Taehaeng 1986:331).

Notation books containing *sijo* notation are one of the most important sources in reconstructing the history of sung *sijo*, as poem collections offer limited insight into whether and especially how the texts were sung. Accordingly, the main hypotheses around the sung *sijo* form's first appearance and further development are based on notation books. More than 10 notation books from the canon of ancient notations (*koakpo*) up to the 1930s contain notations for *sijo*, among them around five dating back to the Chosön period.

The first sources to contain notation for *sijo* are *Yuyeji*,<sup>27</sup> part of Sö Yugu's (1764-1845) *Imwön simnyukchi*<sup>28</sup> (Song Bang-Song 2007:410), estimated to have been written around 1800, and Yi Yugyöng's *Kurachölsa kümjabo*,<sup>29</sup> written during the reign of King Sunjo (1800-1834), likely around 1800 as well. These two notation books have led to the assumption that sung *sijo* in the standard form of the *p'yöng* *sijo* came into existence around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Next to these, there are at least three other notation books from Chosön times that contain *sijo*: The *Samjuk kümbö* (published around 1864), presenting *sijo* notation in five parts and thus giving foundation

<sup>22</sup> *Sijo* 關西本 – Kwansö (former name of Pyöngan province in what is now North Korea) – origin.

<sup>23</sup> *Sijo* 歌詞 – song – text = “Sijo texts”.

<sup>24</sup> 風雅 – song – correct/beautiful = “Poetry”.

<sup>25</sup> 南薰太平歌 – south – waft – big – peaceful – song = “Song of Prosperity on the Southern Breeze”; after Rutt. Rutt explains that “the name refers to ancient poems about the auspicious southern breezes of the golden age of Emperor Shun” (1998:160).

<sup>26</sup> 調呬詞 – melody – text = “Melody and text”.

<sup>27</sup> 遊藝志 – amuse – skill – record = “Book of Arts”; after Um Hae-kyung 2007:44.

<sup>28</sup> 林園十六志 – forest – knoll – ten – six – record; also known as *Imwön kyöngjeji* (林園經濟志 – forest – knoll – rule – relieve – record) or *Imwön kyöngje simnyukchi* (林園經濟十六志 – forest – knoll – rule – relieve – ten – six – record). The term *kyöngje* (經濟 – rule – relieve) is a shortening of the idiom *kyöngsejemin* (經世濟民 – lead – life – relieve – people = “administering one's worldly affairs and relieving the people's suffering”). The book is an encyclopaedia of knowledge and techniques required for the retired scholar's rustic lifestyle; its title comes to mean something like “16 chapters on how to successfully live in rural retreat”; *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘*Imwön kyöngjeji*’, (no specific author given).

<sup>29</sup> 歐邏鐵絲琴字譜 – Europe (two characters) – iron – thread – *kömun* 'go – letter – notation = “The Handbook for the Dulcimer”; after Um Hae-kyung 2007:44.

to the theory that sijo descended from *kagok*, the *Kimyo kŭmbo* (1879) and the *Yŏchang kayorok* (1883). As the *Samjuk kŭmbo* and the *Kimyo kŭmbo* are the first to contain *chirŭm* sijo, *chirŭm* sijo are estimated to have developed around their time of production; based on the surviving documents, no other type of sung sijo can be proven to have existed before 1879 (Shin Woong-Soon 2006:228).

The sijo notations in these notation books are for different instruments: The *Yuyeji* is for *kŏmun'go* (plucked zither), *tanggŭm* (a seven-string Chinese-style harp no longer in use), *saenghwang* (mouth organ) and *yanggŭm* (dulcimer), while the *Kurachŏlsa kŭmjabo* is for only the *yanggŭm*; the sijo notations in *Yuyeji* and *Kurachŏlsa kŭmjabo* are the same (Song Bang-Song 2007:486). Meanwhile, the *Samjuk kŭmbo*<sup>30</sup> contains notations for the *kŏmun'go*.<sup>31</sup> The *Kimyo kŭmbo* on which information is scarce<sup>32</sup> is likely a *kŏmun'go* notation too - the character *kŭm*<sup>33</sup> usually refers to the *kŏmun'go* which was a favoured instrument of the educated literati. Finally, the *Yŏchang kayorok*<sup>34</sup> is notated in *yŏnŭmp'yo*, a type of neume notation for singers (Song Bang-Song 2007:494-95).<sup>35</sup> In a survey of the prefaces to the surviving notation books, Park Sung-Hee details the motivations on the part of their authors: the preservation of music, musical instruction both in terms of instrumental skills and repertoire, and a desire to communicate musical passion to one's descendants (2011:135-7).

### 2.3 The oldest sijo and problems of attribution

<sup>30</sup> 三竹琴譜 – three – bamboo – *kŏmun'go* – notation = “Samjuk Handbook for the Zither” (‘Samjuk’ was the pen name of the unknown compiler: ‘Three bamboos’); after Um Hae-kyung 2007:40.

<sup>31</sup> Park Sung-Hee mentions several other notation books called *Kŭmbo* from before the 20th century, one of which she claims contained sijo (2011:125); it is likely a *kŏmun'go* notation.

<sup>32</sup> The notation book is mentioned only by Shin Woong-Soon who cites two master's theses as sources (2006:228); no Sino-Korean characters are given for its title.

<sup>33</sup> 琴.

<sup>34</sup> 女唱歌謠錄 – woman – singing – song – song – record = “A Record of Popular Songs for Female Voice”; after Park Sung-Hee 2011:125.

<sup>35</sup> See also Sim Chaehwan. *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘Yŏchang kayorok’, and Park Sung-Hee 2011:127. Song Bang-Song may be mistaken to refer to the book as ‘Yŏchang kagongnok’. For an overview of the notation systems used in these and other *chŏngga* notation books, see Park Sung-Hee 2011:126-35. For more general discussions of Korean notations systems see Lee Hyeku 1983 and Howard 1998.

Determination of the time in which the first *sijo* originated is a debated aspect of *sijo* research, and continues to be the subject of much disagreement. Such is the divergence of opinions on this issue that, depending on the scholar in question, the oldest *sijo* are dated to anytime within a time range of 500 years between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. To the *sijo* lover, the question of when the first texts were written may be of little consequence, but among contemporary scholars, much is at stake as regards this topic. In view of Korea's recent history and the re-evaluation and re-appropriation of its cultural heritage (for which, see Pai & Tangherlini 1998), the discussion surrounding *sijo* which treats it as a uniquely Korean cultural expression assumes a political dimension. In positioning the *sijo* tradition next to literary traditions of other countries, claims about *sijo*'s origins and antiquity assume great weight in asserting its status of a long-standing tradition and an icon of Korean identity. It is likely that, due to the lack of documentation and proof on either extreme of the proposed time range of its origin, the debate will never reach a satisfying conclusion. The position a scholar assumes in the worst case comes down to his agenda; in the best case, it reflects his views and position on historical progression and the development of literature. Ultimately, then, the origin of the first *sijo* is and will remain an article of faith.

Kwŏn Tuhwan divides theories about *sijo*'s beginning into two types: those that focus on a specific era in which they believe *sijo* emerged – often in connection with particular *sijo* writers to whom texts are ascribed – and those who discuss the origin of the *sijo* tradition in the context of genres seen as predecessors to *sijo*. He suggests, though, that a new approach is needed:

Accordingly, the possibility of a new debate on *sijo*'s era of origin is found only where we start to avoid the flaws that these two approaches entail. The attempt to connect the origin of *sijo* to the appearance of a specific writer is only one of these flaws. To bring this together with the history of the development of genres preceding *sijo*, such as *hyangga* or Koryŏ poems,<sup>36</sup> has considerable

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<sup>36</sup> The exact term used here is *Kyŏnggich'e ka* (景幾體歌 – sunlight – several – body – song = “*kyŏnggi*-style poem”; after Peter H. Lee 1965:18. A different first Sino-Korean character is nowadays used in ‘*kyŏnggi*’), a genre term for three strophic, didactic long songs from Koryŏ times. I will not discuss them further here, but the

implications. In fact, rather than coinciding with the formative period of a genre, the appearance of a specific writer is much more likely to coincide with the period following it (1993:23).<sup>37</sup>

If we survey the progression of the debate, the original estimates propose especially early dates for the origin of sijo whereas subsequent debate has gradually become more conservative in its estimation, placing the origin date later and later. Although voices arguing for a pre-Koryŏ (that is, before the 10<sup>th</sup> century) origin of sijo exist, they are dismissed by a large majority of scholars and so will not be considered further here. The introduction to Kim Jaihiun Joyce's sijo anthology (1986) is a good example for the traditional view about sijo's origin, the view that held sway for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He assumes that sijo originated in the middle of the Koryŏ period (918-1392), that is, in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, and took on its fixed form towards the end of the Koryŏ dynasty, that is, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. His view is based on less than 20 sijo texts that are ascribed to historical figures from that early era, and which in part reflect historical events revolving around these figures. A famous example is *Tansimga* (The Song of Loyalty, SMS 1666), ascribed to the Koryŏ-dynasty scholar Chŏng Mongju (1337-1392), in which Chŏng declares his loyalty to the Koryŏ regime:

Though this frame should die and die,  
                though I die a hundred times,  
  
My bleached bones all turn to dust,  
                my very soul exist or not—  
  
What can change the undivided heart  
                that glows with faith toward my lord?<sup>38</sup>

Later estimates have been more conservative and have for the most part reflected the lack of evidence for an earlier origin rather than evidence for a later origin; accordingly, when presented

similarities of sijo with especially the song *Hallim pyŏlgok* (翰林別曲) resemble those noted between sijo and other Koryŏ songs, and relate to the proportions of the musical form.

<sup>37</sup> The argument is that only when a genre has become established will we find evidence of remarkable writers in it.

<sup>38</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 56).



as hard-fact-based estimates they are built on shaky ground, not least since any subsequent discovery of earlier documentation will prove them wrong. It is not the existence of the presumed Koryŏ poets or their writing poetry that is called into doubt, but simply the attribution of the extant poems to them because the poems first appear in surviving anthologies that were compiled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *Korea: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary* suggests that earlier attributions are the result of originally Chinese poems having been adapted by late Chosŏn sijo singers (Pratt and Rutt 1999:417) – this can, however, constitute an ambiguous state of semi-authenticity, as it suggests that the actual poems with their actual content existed and were written by the Koryŏ authors, but that those poems were neither in sijo form, nor in Korean.<sup>39</sup> It is clear that if the earliest sijo texts were indeed written by the Koryŏ poets to whom they are attributed, they must have been either originally recorded in Chinese or transmitted orally. Arguing for the latter option means, to be sure, suggesting that a canon of around 20 poems was transmitted for at least 300 years through the turbulent times of the fall of the Koryŏ dynasty and the subsequent changes in religion and value systems – the replacement of Buddhism as a state doctrine with Confucianism – at the start of Chosŏn times, at least until *han'gŭl* was invented in 1446; a bold claim. The date of *han'gŭl*'s invention, on the other hand, leads the most conservative scholars to argue for an origin of sijo not earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century. The main argument for the accuracy of the mainstream view that the Koryŏ texts' ascriptions are accurate has been summarized by Rutt, in reference to two of the first song anthologies containing sijo from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as follows:

Both the *Ch'ŏnggu yŏngŏn* and the *Haedong kayo* contain much material which they attribute to contemporaries of the anthologists. There is little reason to doubt that such works are properly attributed. These two anthologies do not claim any authorship earlier than the latter end of Koryŏ dynasty. Later anthologies often attributed poems, quite incredibly, to much earlier periods. The sober time range of the *Ch'ŏnggu yŏngŏn* and the *Haedong kayo* argues in favor of the general soundness of

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<sup>39</sup> I will return to the theory of Chinese poems as sijo's predecessor below.

their traditional attributions, which have been accepted by the majority of Korean scholars until very recently, though it is recognized now that there is some room for doubt. (1998:158)

The earliest evidence for *sijo* that has no doubt relating to it dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of wooden printing blocks preserved until the present day that record the *Twelve Songs of Tosan* by Yi Hwang (T'oegye), as mentioned above (p. 54).

The musical dimension of *sijo* further complicates discussion. Starting with Chang Sa-Hun, scholarly opinion for a long time held that *sijo* had developed from *kagok*. Whereas the genealogy and origin of *kagok* is relatively uncontroversial, those who opine that *sijo* developed not from *kagok* but another musical predecessor are faced with the questions of whether such a presumed proto-*sijo* song dates back to Koryŏ times or not, whether *sijo* were always sung or not, and whether we have to look for the origin of *sijo* in a literary or in a musical tradition. One recent theory holds that *Simbanggok*, a Koryŏ-era song, is “the original *shijo* music and the ancestor of the *sijo* text” (O'Rourke 2002:6), although the exact meaning of the designation is debated:

These [dues from *sijo* anthologies] bear witness to the fact that among the people who dealt with *sijo*, *Simbanggok* – no matter if the designation referred to a simple court song, or the text and the song together – was, over the centuries, seen as both the original source of *sijo* music and the origin of the *sijo* text. Accordingly, examination of the time and circumstances of *Simbanggok*'s formation might become one and the same task with the discovery of *sijo*'s time of origin and genesis (Kwŏn Tuhwan 1993:30).

A number of commentators point not only to lack of evidence for the Koryŏ attribution of *sijo*, but actually cite evidence to the contrary. Donna Kwon cites written communication with Robert Provine who suggested that the language of those early *sijo* texts is not typical of the era but is more reminiscent of Chosŏn times (1995:19). David McCann cautions about any such attributions in general, calling into question even the attribution of later *sijo* texts whenever they are connected to the names of great historical figures rather than poets famed on the merit of

their creations. This forms part of his view of an inherent historicity of *sijo* in general, of which he cites as an example a poem (2000:147, see also Rutt 1998:162-163) attributed to the famous admiral Yi Sunsin (1545-1599), who is noted for his role in defending the country from the Japanese in the Imjin Wars (on which see Pratt and Rutt, entry ‘Yi Sunsin’, 1999: 524-5).<sup>40</sup>

In summary, the attribution of the earliest *sijo* remains an article of faith. Those who argue in favour of authentic attribution will claim that there is no compelling evidence to the contrary and that famous historical figures may reasonably be surmised to have written the poems attributed to them.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, Donna Kwon points out that some of the historicization may have to do with “bolster[ing] *sijo*’s viability as a ‘classic’, or ‘great’ tradition.[...] In Korea’s contemporary intellectual environment, *sijo*’s ambiguous origins leave much room for scholars to frame *sijo* according to various agendas or biases” (1995:19). We can observe a parallel with the discussion about the question on whether the earliest *sijo* texts were sung or not. In agreement with Kwon’s suspicion, it is my impression that regardless of the lack of documentation, conservative scholars in the mainstream of the Korean academic establishment have tended to favour old estimates for the appearance of *sijo* texts, but have dismissed the idea of *sijo* being sung since its inception, in what may seem to introduce a paradoxical inconsistency. In other words, if a scholar takes a conservative stance on the issue, claiming that *sijo* cannot be conjectured to have been sung because there is no proof that they were, the same conservative logic should dictate that the oldest ascriptions are not accurate because no contemporaneous documentation supports this view. *Sijo*’s prestige, it seems, is highest when they are seen as a form of poetry to be read and contemplated that dates back at least 800 years.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In a 2008 interview, Rutt, having apparently reconsidered the problem of ascription, said the following: “Very early on I stopped believing in the haphazard attribution of *sijo* to well-known people in history. I don’t think that Yi Sunsin actually wrote the *sijo*. They were songs for him. I don’t know why now, but I had a very strong impression that the bulk are anonymous; but I think they’re anonymous because they were written by women” (2008:140).

<sup>41</sup> This view was adopted, for example, by musicologist Sheen Dae-Cheol [Sin Taech’öl] in a meeting at the Academy of Korean Studies in 2014. When I discussed McCann’s claim with him, Sheen pointed towards the erudition of the elite in Chosŏn times which would have granted the ability of even a military figure like Yi Sunsin to pen his own *sijo*.

<sup>42</sup> “The cult of the unsung *sijo*, the *sijo* never intended to be sung, provides a lively strain in modern writing. It already has a history of some eighty years that will soon be worth study in its own right” (Rutt 1998:xx-xxi).

Whether we choose to see (older) *sijo* as poems or song texts, and whether we consider the tradition to have continued unbroken into the 20<sup>th</sup> century or not, an expressive form that spans 700 (or even 800<sup>43</sup>), years can rightly be seen as an epitome of Koreanness, of an idea of proto-national psyche. While *sijo* writing was, of course, the domain of only a small elite, it has been a significant intellectual arena over the centuries, that became progressively more inclusive as it came to be partaken in by a considerable range of people from different parts of Korean society. Yet, I hold that even if the *sijo* tradition is only 300 (or 400) years old this does not substantially diminish its significance as a poetic mouthpiece of the Korean people of antiquity.

## 2.4 Theories about the origins of *sijo* and its literary predecessors

A similarly lively debate as that dealt with in the previous section has revolved around the question of where *sijo* came from. A form like *sijo* does not suddenly appear out of nowhere, and a range of different songs and poetry forms have been proposed as either influences or direct predecessors. Here, too, the debate is complicated by the distinction between *sijo* as a text and as a musical genre. As in other parts of the world, texts are documented more easily than music. We know, for instance, each word of an ancient Greek tragedy, but reconstruction of the music is an arduous if not impossible task, not least because of musical parameters not unambiguously represented in musical notation. In the Korean case, the main obstacle is not a lack of early music notation; *Mandaeyŏp*, for example, the song that the extant *kagok* repertoire was derived from, appears for the first time in the *Kŭm hapchabo*,<sup>44</sup> a *kŏmun'go* notation compiled in 1572. Rather more difficult is the task of isolating the mechanisms of variation through which new pieces were created (for a methodology to do so developed and practised by Korean musicologists, see Hahn Man-young 1990:101-17). Consequently, in the case of *sijo*, the observations about textual similarities, and realistic conjectures about possible origins reach much further into the past than

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<sup>43</sup> This difference depends on whether we consider 20<sup>th</sup> century *sijo* writing as a continuation of the previous tradition.

<sup>44</sup> 琴合字譜 – *kŏmun'go* – combine – letter – score = “Zither Tablature Notation”; after Park Sung-Hee 2011:144.

the respective discussion on the musical side. The intertwining of literary and musical aspects in *sijo* and the research on its origins make attempts to separate these concerns especially tricky and complicated. Thus, musical forms surmised to be predecessors of *sijo* can, for example, resemble *sijo* in their textual arrangements, but not in the music itself. And even though research on the musical side of *sijo* would exclude the study of *kagok* and its origins, *kagok* with its musical predecessors is always relevant in the discussion on the origin of the *sijo* text: If we hold that *sijo* texts were sung to the *kagok* melody earlier than to the *sijo* melody, that *taeyŏp* (–*daeyŏp*) in its various incarnations (*Mandaeyŏp*, *Chungdaeyŏp*, *Saktaeyŏp*) is the precursor to *kagok*, and that in our quest for *sijo*’s origin we are likely looking for a musical form, it is basically impossible to wholly separate the discussion of *sijo* as a literary form from the tracing of the lineage of *kagok*.

As discussed above, the term ‘*sijo*’ was not in use for *sijo* texts until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, the terminology is confusing at times when, for example the term *tan’ga*, ‘short song’, is used, not only as what Donna Kwon terms “a hypothetical operative term for any vocal genres that served as a setting for this short three-line *sijo* text” before the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1995:35-6), but also to a Koryŏ-era genre, or is used as just another word for *sijo*.

Theories about possible predecessors for *sijo* abound, and all the suggested predecessors coincide with *sijo* in respect to some features, but not others.<sup>45</sup> A couple of notable ones are introduced in the following. I start with theories that treat *sijo* as a text and assess textual similarities with other genres; these are divided again according to whether it is a native or a Chinese form in which *sijo*’s origin is seen. It is striking that as the three-*chang* structure – previously held as one of *sijo*’s most distinctive features and “so embedded in the popular consciousness as to be virtually unassailable” (O’Rourke 2002:9) – has been called into question in newer research, a good number of the theories lose much of their plausibility. Even if we hold that the three-*chang* design is reflected in the unfolding of a *sijo* text’s sense structure, regardless of the format *sijo* is presented in, the argument does not hold up to scrutiny: In Chapter 1.2, I

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<sup>45</sup> Overviews of these theories are found in Chang Sa-Hun (1986:167-76), Kim Taehaeng (1986:46-97), Kwŏn Tuhwan (1993), Donna Kwon (1995:20-40) and others. Cho Kyu-Ick provides a historical overview of the scholarly debates around *sijo* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1994:416-9).

discussed the difficulties in and disputes about assigning *ku* numbers to *sijo* texts. So even though the tripartite division of the *sijo* text is justified in that it creates sections of similar length, the same division is less convincing with regard to the sense structure, where *sijo* should more accurately be seen as having four sections.

One popular theory proposes that the predecessor of *sijo* is *hyangga*, the earliest type of Korean poetry, partly transmitted in the *Samguk Yusa*<sup>46</sup> and written in *hyangch'al*.<sup>47</sup> *Hyangga*'s sense structure is divided into three sections which are seen as corresponding to the three *chang* of *sijo*. A more convincing argument, however, is the fact that in *hyangga*, much as in a lot of *sijo*, the first syllable group of what could be seen as the equivalent to *sijo*'s final section starts with an exclamation. Hardly anyone will deny that there is some connection between the two, yet Kim Taehaeng points out that “making the connection between *hyangga* and *sijo* in this situation where nothing fundamental has been established about the way *hyangga* were sung is an argument whose certainty is hard to uphold” (1986:48). If *sijo* derived from *hyangga*, it appears somewhat surprising that there is no documentation of *sijo* written in *hyangch'al*; if this form of writing served for the transmission of *hyangga*, it should have done so for *sijo*. Peter H. Lee writes the following about the fate of *hyangch'al* during the Koryŏ dynasty:

... the Koryŏ dynasty neither maintained the use of the *hyangch'al* nor substituted any other system. [...W]hen we enter Koryŏ period, the use of the *hyangch'al* and of the genre of the *Saenaennorae* [the native Korean term for *hyangga*] disappears. This is because skill in Chinese, which developed to a considerable degree toward the end of Silla, proved itself really capable of translating the Korean emotions and innermost feelings. The truth is that scholars found the *hyangch'al* inefficient; they called it a puzzle and abandoned it and the genre of the *Saenaennorae* that went with it (1965:15).

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<sup>46</sup> 三國遺事 – three – country – leave behind – matter = “Remnants of the Three Kingdoms”. This work, compiled around 1285 by the Buddhist monk Iryŏn, is a complement to the earlier *Samguk sagi*, the first official history of Korea. It mostly treats the Silla kingdom, is an important source of Buddhist legends and miscellaneous writings, and includes the majority of the extant *hyangga* (Pratt and Rutt 1999:400-1).

<sup>47</sup> *Hyangch'al* was a Silla-era writing system to write the Korean language. It interspersed Sino-Korean characters used for their meaning with others borrowed only for their sound which makes it extremely difficult to read (Pratt and Rutt 1999:178-9).

One theory from the 1930s proposes *noraekkarak* (shamanistic chants) as the textual predecessor of *sijo* (and *sogyo* for the music). This comes from Yi Hŭisŭng and is based on a similarity in the three-section format of the form (Chang Sa-Hun 1985:168). However, it has been pointed out that these chants were orally transmitted, and so it is not clear whether they actually existed before *sijo* at all; even if they did, they may have changed over the centuries or been influenced by other genres. In short, it seems that *noraekkarak* may just as well derive from *sijo* as the other way around. Finally, given that the first recorded *sijo* texts were by no means all recorded in the three-*chang* format, the argument loses its basis.

Kim Taehaeng (1986:48) opines that theories which propose Koryŏ songs as the predecessor to *sijo* have the most “logical merit”. He argues that the temporal distance of the two gives strength to these theories. *Hyangga*, after all, date back to Shilla times and are thus at least 300 years apart from the presumed emergence of *sijo* in late Koryŏ times, so a development from *hyangga* over Koryŏ poems to *sijo* is a possibility. Among Koryŏ songs, *Chŏngŭpsa*,<sup>48</sup> *Toichangga*,<sup>49</sup> and *Manjŏnch’unbyŏlsa*,<sup>50</sup> to name a few, have been observed to exhibit formal similarities to *sijo*, for example with regard to the length of sections, the setup of final sections, or even correspondences in the grouping of musical sections (Kim Taehaeng 1986:75-86). Similarities between *Chinjak* and *Mandaeyŏp*, the latter a predecessor to *kagok*, have also been observed (1986:51-69).<sup>51</sup> However, as many of these songs have verses of varying length, to speak of direct

<sup>48</sup> 井邑詞 – Chŏngŭp (the name of a city in North Chŏlla Province) – words = “Story from Chŏngŭp”.

<sup>49</sup> 悼二將歌 – sad – two – general – song = “Dirge”; after Peter H. Lee 1965:15.

<sup>50</sup> 滿殿春別詞 – full – royal palace – spring – divide – words = “Spring Overflows the Pavilion”; after Peter H. Lee 1965:19.

<sup>51</sup> Keith Pratt helpfully alerted me to a recent article by Park Jaemin & Kim Jinhee, published in June 2017, after I had already concluded my research. The authors argue for *Chinjak* as the predecessor of *sijo*, correlating the song’s influence on *mandaeyŏp* with the appearance of the first extant *sijo* texts. In doing so, they accept the assumption that *sijo*’s musical form was derived from *kagok*, a problematic assumption that has been questioned by other scholars (see Chapter 2.5), and it seems therefore more accurate to see the article as a discussion of the origin of *kagok*. The authors’ attempt to find a single hour of birth for both the musical and the literary form of *kagok* makes for an attractive argument, and the evidence in Yi Hyŏnbo’s (1467-1555) writing that they cite (2017:241-2) is fascinating. But while the authors state that their evidence “shows that the [literary] *sijo* form originated and developed under the influence of *mandaeyŏp* around the late fifteenth century” (2017:243, my emphasis), their evidence is most compelling with regard to the second of these claims. It really is a matter of how we define “origin”: *Mandaeyŏp*’s musical structure clearly seems to have had a role in determining the proportions of the *sijo* text, which can reasonably be argued to be the most recognizable characteristic of the *sijo* form. Yet, the fact that in *onari*, *mandaeyŏp*’s text, the first syllable group of the final *chang*, which in *sijo*’s

links is tenuous. Furthermore, Kevin O'Rourke summarizes a problem with these views: "Opponents of this view insist there is no critical evidence to support such claims: [there is no] evidence to show how *shijo* developed from Koryŏ popular songs" (2002:5).

The only foreign place of origin for *sijo* that has been proposed is China. If so, *sijo*'s predecessor could then be either Buddhist songs – *pulga*<sup>52</sup> in Korean – or Chinese quatrains, one type of *hansi*. The similarity with *pulga* rests on a similar three-part division which, however, is doubtful as a defining characteristic of *sijo*. The similarity of *sijo*'s sense structure with its four parts – *ki*, stating of the theme, *sŭng*, development of the theme, *chŏn*, anti-theme or twist, and *kyŏl*, conclusion – with that of the Chinese quatrain in which these four are assigned one line each has led to the theory that *sijo* are the result of translating Chinese poems. Two things diminish the plausibility of this theory. First, the length of the quatrain lines and the *chang* in *sijo* differ considerably (although the seven-syllable line sometimes featured in *hansi* is seen as corresponding to *sijo*'s breath groups, which often exhibit a similar length, combining three and four syllables). Secondly, the separation into these lines is not a defining feature of *sijo*. If the assignment of one part of the sense structure to each line is characteristic of the quatrain and *sijo* does not exhibit the same pattern, but instead conflates *chŏn* and *kyŏl* into the final section, the two can hardly be said to be similar. On the other hand, a number of reasons can be cited in favour of this theory, as Kim Taehaeng admits:

No matter what specific elements in a form we take as evidence of a shared genre, it has to be admitted that *hansi* played a role in a considerable part of the *sijo* form's elements. Not only is it clear that *sijo* were a genre well-liked by the scholar-officials from the very beginning, but, based on everything that can be assumed when we consider that the scholar-officials chose *hansi* culture as their way of life, we can reasonably confirm that some elements of *hansi* exerted an influence on the development of the *sijo* form (1986:47).

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sense structure amounts to the twist, "is semantically connected to the third line, and not to the fifth line" (2017:242, footnote 60), suggests that an important characteristic of the *sijo* text had its origin somewhere else.

<sup>52</sup> 佛歌 – Buddhism – song.



If we take into consideration all the ways in which the invention date of *han'gŭl* detracts from native-origin theories, this is one of the less improbable theories, even though, as O'Rourke writes, "*Shijo* is so totally Korean in its sensibility that commentators have always been reluctant to see its source in a foreign tradition. Hence they have consistently refused to accept the theory that *shijo* emerged in the process of translating Chinese quatrains" (2002:5). While such reluctance is unsurprising, it is nonetheless paradoxical: If we assume early *sijo*, for example from Koryŏ times, to have been written as quatrains by Korean writers, nothing precludes them from being endowed with "Korean sensibility" – if not in the language, then at least in their meaning, images, themes, and so on. Likewise, when these quatrains were translated into *han'gŭl*, it must have been Korean writers who undertook the translations and would have infused them anew with Korean sensibility. In fact, we can wonder whether a poem that is in *han'gŭl* can ever be devoid of Korean sensibility. While this is a question for socio-linguists, it may still be surmised that any successful translation by a Korean of ideas originally formulated by a Korean will automatically be infused with Korean sensibility. Finally, the most compelling argument is that there is in fact a good number of *sijo* for which the corresponding quatrains are extant (as is noted by Kim Taehaeng 1986:47). If we take the argument to its conclusion, the difference between supporting and rejecting the quatrain origin theory revolves around the distinction of whether such a *sijo* is seen as the original writer's *sijo* written finally in its intended form, or the translator's own *sijo* based on the quatrain by an earlier writer. Detractors of the quatrain theory have, however, argued that the four-part sense structure is a common structure in all literature. Accordingly, *sijo* would then have been inspired not by quatrains, but by all literature (1986:47).

## 2.5 Theories about the origins of the sung *sijo* form

Although the previous discussion has mentioned a number of possible predecessors for *sijo* that are either proven or have been hypothesized to have been musical genres, the similarities of these with *sijo* have been noted based on formal observations related to the text. What the theories

discussed so far have ventured to explain is always the origin of the text we know as *sijo* today, even where discussed in relation to music. This section, then, completes the circle by focussing on theories about genres advocated as predecessors of the sung *sijo* form based on musical criteria. These are much fewer in number, reflecting that most likely the *sijo* text is older than the sung *sijo* form. As the concept of musical authorship and composition is foreign to the Korean tradition, new pieces of any genre were typically created through adaptation or variation of extant music. A parallel may be seen in the adaptation of secular songs for religious music in Western music of, for example, the late Renaissance,<sup>53</sup> or the borrowing of melodic fragments as subjects for fugues or variation movements in the Baroque period.<sup>54</sup> For the Korean tradition, Lee Hye-ku has shown how various versions and movements of the *Yŏngsan boesan* suite were derived from the original melody through transposition and change of mode (1983; chapters 7 and 8). The same *modus operandi* prevailed in the sung *chŏngak* realm, hence Hahn Man-young (1995:101-19) describes how different modal versions of *Chungdaeyŏp*, one of *kagok*'s predecessors, evolved. In an interview on 11 August 2015 in his house near Kongnŭng Station in Seoul, folklore scholar Yi Pohyŏng suggested to me that the melody of *Snyangsangga*, one of the twelve *kaſa*, – a genre that has mostly eluded scholars in their attempts at tracing its melodic origins<sup>55</sup> – was partly based on folksong. There is, then, ample precedent for the notion that the *sijo* melody evolved from some previous melodic configuration, as opposed to the idea that Yi Sech'un or anyone else created a new melody from scratch, an assumption that may best be seen as anachronistic and the result of the influx of modern ideas related to composition and authorship.

For a long time *sijo* were assumed to have descended from *kagok*, a theory that we owe mostly to Chang Sa-Hun (1986:27), who correlated the different *sijo* types with various pieces from the

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<sup>53</sup> In the *Concise History of Western Music*, the following example is given: "A [...] somewhat startling example uses Hassler's lied *Mein G'müth ist mir verwirret* (My peace of mind is shattered [by a tender maiden's charms]), which, with new sacred words, became the Passion chorale *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* (O head, all bloody and wounded)" (Hanning 1997:152).

<sup>54</sup> Examples from the Baroque period abound. Among them are Johann Sebastian Bach's organ fugue in B minor (BWV579) which takes as its subject the opening of the second movement of the *Sonata da chiesa* No. 4 by Arcangelo Corelli, and Bach's famous *Passacaglia* (BWV582), which is an amalgam of two *passacaglia* subjects by André Raison.

<sup>55</sup> See also Condit 1978.

*kagok* cycle. Perhaps more than this, the five-part divisions of *sijo* notations in the *Samjuk kũmbo* were seen as another important piece of evidence in favour of Chang's argument, as well as the pervasiveness of *kagok* in the environment from which the musical *sijo* form sprang; in the early days of *kugak*<sup>56</sup> research, *kagok* was the best answer scholars could give to the question of sung *sijo*'s origin. While there is no doubt that *sijo* has been influenced by *kagok*, such arguments are not in reality conclusive evidence of direct descent. In our interview, Yi Pohyŏng suggested that next to the Koryŏ songs discussed above, there was a much greater number of songs during Koryŏ times, the majority of which were lost as a result of both the Imjin Wars, and the disregard in which Confucian scholars during the Chosŏn dynasty held the Korean vernacular language and much of the culture of the previous dynasty, Koryŏ. We know that a number of Koryŏ songs had their lyrics remade in early Chosŏn times, in respect of which Donna Kwon writes that, "Koryo court and banquet songs, like the Chinese *t'zu* and the native *changga*, were re-examined, dismissed and labeled as too 'crude and earthy,' and ultimately too emotional, passionate and sensual. In some cases, just the text was changed and music left intact, in others the music became slower to allow for the utmost comprehension of each syllable of poetic text. Melismatic melody lines were simplified, and regular rhythms were preferred over the previous predominance of irregular rhythms" (1995:31).<sup>57</sup> Among the extant songs dating from late Koryŏ times, some form of *taeyŏp* is generally accepted to be the predecessor of the later *kagok* repertoire through a long process of modifications (as in *Mandaeyŏp*, *Chungdaeyŏp*, *Saktaeyŏp*). Another theory proposes *Pukchŏn*,<sup>58</sup> one such late Koryŏ song, as the predecessor of *sijo*. The argument about *Pukchŏn* can be summarized as follows: it dates back to Koryŏ, and *sijo* were sung to the *Pukchŏn* melody in late Chosŏn, which makes *Pukchŏn* a possible candidate for both a predecessor to the *sijo* melody and the origin of the *sijo* text. Difficulties arise in assessing this claim, from the fact that different

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<sup>56</sup> *Kugak* is an umbrella term for various forms of traditional music in Korea from before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or music derived from such forms. The term stands in opposition to the Western classical art tradition.

<sup>57</sup> The same source contains a short concise genealogy of *sijo* (20-40) with a greater focus on questions of *sijo*'s socio-historical environment over the centuries. On revisions of Koryŏ songs, see also Song Bang-Song 2007:257-60.

<sup>58</sup> 北殿 – north – palace; a court song from the time of King Ch'unghye.

versions of *Pukchŏn* can be found in a number of historical documents ranging from the *Taeak hubo* – which, published in 1759, is thought to contain music from the times of King Sejo’s reign (1455-1468) – to the *sijo* collections from the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Kwŏn Tuhwan 1993:25-26). As *Pukchŏn* was among a number of songs that had their lyrics revised in 1490 (Song Bang-Song 2007:259), Sŏng Hokyŏng in 1983 analysed the different extant versions and hypothesized what the original arrangement of *Pukchŏn*’s lyrics might have been – he seems to have been the first to suggest the song as the origin of *sijo*. Kwŏn Tuhwan assesses his contribution like this:

However, just as Prof. Sŏng himself made dear in his conclusion, it appears as though his discussion entails issues that will in the future necessitate further inquiry. The *Taeak hubo* shows that *Pukchŏn*, which has been passed down since Koryŏ times, was connected with various melodies in the following order: *Chŏnjang*, *Chungjang*, *Pujang*, *Puyŏp*, *Taeyŏp*, *Puyŏp*, *Yiyŏp*, *Samyŏp*, *Sayŏp*, *Puyŏp*, *Oyŏp*. But for all that is known, one task remains: it will only be when we can show why and through which process this court song fragmented, that we can clearly describe the relationship between the original *Pukchŏn* from Koryŏ times and *Pukchŏn* sung with *sijo* texts (1993:26).

While it is established that the *taeyŏp* strain went on to become *kagŏk*, Hwang JunYon takes credit for testing the hypothesis that *Pukchŏn* laid the foundation for the musical *sijo* form. His comparative analysis (1986) shows that elements in *sijo* such as musical form, *changdan*, melody, and the setting of the text to music all exhibit little resemblance with *kagŏk*, but are closely aligned between *sijo* and *Pukchŏn*. Hwang JunYon’s argument is hard to assess without intimate familiarity with Korean music theory and the analysis of historical scores. Although I have found no explicit arguments against it, his theory is not unanimously accepted by Korean scholars, so evaluations on how compelling his evidence actually is ostensibly differ. In my interview with the folklorist Yi Pohyŏng (who, it has to be mentioned, conceded that this was not his main area of expertise), Yi suggested that more research was needed before it could be considered that Hwang had provided conclusive proof, and that *sijo*’s descent from *Pukchŏn* is not nearly as firmly established as *kagŏk*’s descent from *taeyŏp*. However, the older theory that directly links *sijo* with

*kagok* has lost weight, and today stands as little more than a working hypothesis carried over from the early decades of kugak research.

## Chapter 3. The content of sijo

### Introduction

This chapter breaks away from the two-pronged approach in my discussion of sijo. While a parallel view on sijo's literary and musical dimensions opens up many new perspectives, a deeper understanding of the sijo text's aesthetic is not one of them. In my unpublished master's thesis "An intermediary vocal form between court and folk music – a fresh look at Korean *kasa*" (2013), I have discussed a selection of pieces in the twelve *kasa* repertoire, reflecting on the music-text relationship and on whether the music is intended to directly express the lyrical content. Although I determined that this possibility could certainly be suggested by the musical differences apparent between individual *kasa* songs, I became aware that there was a preponderance of arguments in contra, arguments which I have since corroborated in interviews with Korean scholars such as Yi Pohyŏng. However, sijo stands in stark contrast, and it would be a stretch to even try to find any meaningful connection between the content of the text and the music in sijo. Indeed, there are close to 5000 known sijo texts but only one basic melody with a number of variants, so the correspondence has to be limited to the musical sections that coincide with the sense structure (as explored in Chapter 1.2). If anything, a sijo singer adapting a sijo text not widely sung has a choice between the variants of the melody, that is, between singing the text as *p'yŏng* or *chirŭm* sijo. This, however, does not substantially change the imbalance between the large number of texts and the small number of musical choices. In one of our meetings at the Academy of Korean Studies in the fall of 2014, the musicologist Sheen Dae-Cheol briefly detailed some conventions to which singers adhere in choosing the performance mode of a given sijo text. He mentioned, for example, that the *chirŭm* sijo variant was commonly employed whenever a

singer adapted a text that takes the perspective of a speaker associated with being male, a hero and/or a military figure.

So while the aesthetic of sung sijo is discussed in detail in the Chapters 7 and 8, this chapter is limited to the content of the sijo text and is included to complete the picture of sijo with a discussion of its content. One of my intentions in this chapter is to bring an anthropological perspective to the discussion of sijo's content. This is partly tackled in the first section, where I present the problems in abstracting general features of sijo when faced with a corpus of almost 5000 works; the second section contains an overview of sijo writing through the eras according to a number of established English-language scholars. I then survey some of the common topics and themes in a third section, discussing sample poems for each such section, and end with a discussion of the sijo text aesthetic that touches on the divergent opinions of previous scholars.

### **3.1 Problems of representation and abstraction**

Chŏng Pyŏnguk's seminal sijo anthology *Sijo munhak sajŏn* (1966) contains almost 2400 poems, but thousands of additional sijo have been discovered since its publication date. Chapter 1.2 has shown that hardly any statement about the sijo form will apply to all these thousands of texts. The same impossibility is found in regard to the content of sijo texts, so commentators draw on a range of examples in their descriptions of sijo. Ideally, the texts a scholar chooses should be representative in some way. Representativeness, in turn, is established in different ways by different writers: a scholar could pick the sijo that he/she likes best personally, or those that are most famous; he/she may choose those that cover the greatest range of diversity across all sijo writing, or the ones that he/she considers the outliers, that is, those worth discussing for their being unusual. Hence, in his anthology of 244 texts, Richard Rutt acknowledges this when he says he chose poems that "would be likely to give pleasure in translation" (1998:7). Jaihiun Joyce Kim's anthology contains 600 translations where he notes that the selection is based on "aesthetic quality", but without excluding texts that are "obviously didactic or Taoist, because

they have been in the main tradition of the cultural heritage of Korea” (1986:vii)<sup>1</sup> – this statement hints at the assumption of such poems being considered inferior so that their inclusion apparently needs justification. Kevin O’Rourke’s anthology of 611 texts (2002) does not explain the criteria he has applied for inclusion, while Contogenis and Choe’s selection (1997) is limited to 53 texts, all of which are presumed to have been written by *keisaeng* courtesans. David McCann’s anthology of early Korean literature (2000) contains 35 well-known texts. In every case, a scholar who is not part of the tradition – especially when he/she is not of Korean ethnicity, but similarly when he/she is a contemporary Korean scholar who may be considered no less of an outsider to the Chosŏn tradition – decides which texts out of a canon of more than 2400 are ‘representative’, that is, relevant to translation and analysis. But, the procedure adopted would certainly be regarded as problematic by anthropologists when it is not acknowledged. The problem becomes obvious when we suppose that I claim the following: “Sijo’s essence is in the reproduction of stereotypical ideas without fundamental change.” A substantial number of the 2400 texts in Chŏng Pyŏnguk’s sijo encyclopaedia would conform neatly to my definition; at the same time, my definition would result in a selection of ‘representative’ works diametrically opposed to and possibly mutually exclusive with the selections undertaken by other authors based on their (other) criteria. So, if our question is “What is typical of sijo?” the anthropologist’s somewhat flippant answer may rest on the quantitative: these are the traits that the majority of sijo exhibit. The literature scholar, meanwhile, will not deny this, but will prefer a qualitative answer: this is what the best examples are like. More likely, though, the anthropologist will ask a more difficult question: what did the people in the times of sijo as a living tradition like about sijo? Literature scholars, however, have at times exhibited a bias towards the modern – and basically Western – aesthetic sensibility in their evaluation of individual sijo and their considerations about what the best sijo – or the sijo most worth discussing – are.

To explore this, we may start by considering David McCann’s foreword to the reprint of Richard Rutt’s anthology *The Bamboo Grove: An Introduction to Sijo* (1998), in which McCann makes

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<sup>1</sup> Grammar adjusted in this and a few other citations.



a number of statements about *sijo* and points out, among other things, its creative potential as an immediate vehicle of expression with room for innovation and an individual mark, in contrast to the more convention-bound world of the *hansi* Chinese poem:

Statements in this realm [of the subversive, vernacular Korean record rather than the official historical records written in Chinese] were powerful and personal rather than careful and public. It became the realm of all the people and seems to have been the realm of the heart, not head, where even the most carefully composed public figures were said to have uttered, whispered, shouted or sung what the songs record (McCann 1998:x).

McCann clarifies the last part of his comment with a suggestion that “the public figures represented in the *sijo* tradition [might have been] in some literal sense *composed* [and so might] historical figures and names have been connected ex post facto to the *sijo* they were said, but never recorded, to have uttered” (1998:x). On the next page, he tells us the following:

[*Sijo* remind us] that the history is itself a highly contested realm of discourse, with the dominant side at any given moment seeking to impose its view of events on the official record, while the other found expression in such forms as the *sijo*. This can appear directly as a matter of the contested historical record. It can also appear less directly in other topics or subject areas, such as [specific love songs or deconstructive *sasöl sijo*] that remind us that the vernacular was already subversive in a cultural and political system that made such extensive use of the Chinese model (1998:xi).

Finally, one page later, he continues with the comment that for all their subversive potential, *han'gŭl* and *sijo* were not always used that way and “pompous thoughts indeed could be pressed into a *sijo* song, as witness the mercifully brief selection of ‘Moral Songs’ [in Rutt’s anthology to which the foreword belongs]” (1998:xii).

A reader of those pages is likely to come away with the following conclusions about the characteristics of *sijo*:

1. Public figures said in *sijo* what they dared not say on the official record.

2. Some such utterances may be spurious and attributed to public figures ex post facto, likely in a spirit of subversion.
3. For those denied their place in the official history, *sijo* were an outlet to provide their version of events.
4. The use of the Korean script, *han'gŭl*, even in love or *sasŏl* *sijo*, can be seen as a political and subversive act.
5. Moral songs are not typical *sijo* and therefore do not have to be accounted for in this reading of *sijo*.

His foreword, then, opens a general *sijo* anthology with remarks that seemingly refer to the whole of *sijo* as an abstraction. In fact, however, they do not readily characterize even a significant number of texts. Instead, McCann's ideas are his take on a number of texts he has on his mind, especially those that he discussed in his own *Early Korean Literature: Selections and Introductions* (2000:139-58),<sup>2</sup> which was published two years after his foreword to Rutt's book. Those texts, accordingly, may be "McCann's *sijo*", the texts that he sees as representative and relevant to analysis, but there is no obvious evidence that his description accurately characterizes a substantial portion of the *sijo* canon – much less all of it – and his dismissal of moral songs pre-empts the objection that the moral *sijo* in the anthology, as well as other famous examples by "the three greatest scholars of the Yi dynasty" (namely, Sŏ Kyŏngdŏk (1489-1546), Yi Hwang (1501-1570) and Yi I (1536-1584) (Jaihiun Joyce Kim 1986:51)) fit none of the characteristics he establishes, or at least none of them as I have summarized them above. Ironically, on the other hand, Kevin O'Rourke introduces his selection of moral *sijo* by anonymous writers with the following words: "The moral poems in particular reveal the humor that is so much a part of the anonymous *shijo* tradition: [...] they poke fun at *yangban* society, they satirize the bureaucracy and

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<sup>2</sup> The aesthetical appraisal of *sijo* in the book goes into depth on a number of aspects – choice of words, aspects of the interspersing of Korean with Sino-Korean, and so on – identified in four different poems, with much of the analysis dedicated to positioning the poems in the context of their writers, their eras and recurring topics in Korean history: to situating them as part of Korean history (2000:139-58). While the procedure is insightful and thorough, some of the observations appear as highly specific to the small number of texts McCann has selected.

the religious world; and in the process they inculcate a native earthy wisdom (2002:160)” – in other words, a selection of moral poems that stand out for their subversive spirit.

For an even-handed aesthetic appreciation of the moral songs to be applied, it has to be remembered that Koreans throughout Chosŏn dynasty and up to the present did and still do not think quite as little of those moral poems as McCann. This is evidenced, for example, by the famousness of Yun Sŏndo’s cycle *The song of the five friends*. Therefore, the lens through which McCann looks at the moral sijo is not historical, but that of modern literary criticism. McCann is not alone in this, and most commentators have pre-selected and dismissed one or the other group of sijo as, for example, “historical, topical, and thus, not as accessible to the modern reader” (Contogenis and Choe 1997:14).<sup>3</sup> More such assessments that see certain sijo as “less sijo-ish than other sijo” will be introduced in the next section, and in most cases the distinction made seems to be based on the scholar’s subjective judgment. Just as the deviations from the syllable count in the discussions on the sijo form, which had in the past led to “variously disguised apologies for the standard Korean versifier’s inability to keep the pattern” (McCann 1988:2), finally gave way to new descriptions of sijo’s formal characteristics, it may be time to change the lens through which we view sijo, given the many examples that do not pass our modern sensibility’s test of originality, wit and ingenuity.

Although both Rutt and O’Rourke discuss some of the challenges of rendering sijo in English, a more fundamental question has hardly been addressed: whether in the discussion of a sijo, scholars are actually speaking about the same thing. I have become aware that scholars at times exhibit vastly different interpretations of a sijo’s meaning. This appears most evidently in translations, but it may be assumed that Korean commentators will often similarly assume that a given poem is understood by everyone in the way it is by them. It should come as no surprise that commentators who take away vastly different meanings from the same poem will come to different conclusions about sijo’s characteristics; it could further be proposed that different

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<sup>3</sup> While this somewhat sweeping claim could be debated, Contogenis and Choe are justified in that they do not claim for their observations to apply to sijo in general.

interpretations relate to specific preconceptions in a reader's outlook on *sijo*, but to propose this takes us too far, at least for the moment.

Comparative readings of Korean *sijo* in bilingual editions show that, as with much other poetry, many *sijo* are ambiguous in their meaning and thus elude translators in whose work these different interpretations can be appreciated most readily. There are likely to be a number of reasons for this inherent in the *sijo* texts, such as a lack of explicitness that is part of the aesthetic, texts that rely heavily on classical, intertextual or extratextual references, and the mention of items, animal or flower species that are not familiar to the modern reader. An additional reason would be that pre-modern Korean, especially poetic language, is static and grammatically ambiguous due to the frequent omission of a sentence's subject, the lack of conjugations in the Korean language, and the inconsistent use of grammatical markers. Furthermore, we should not forget that many *sijo* writers mainly wrote in Classical Chinese (*hanmun*) and often used *hanmun* fragments in their texts; *hanmun*, however, is notoriously difficult to interpret, humbling, according to Grace Koh, even the most accomplished *hanmun* scholars.<sup>4</sup> As a result, one and the same poem is found translated (and understood) in bafflingly different ways across various sources.

Let us look at a few examples of the difficulties. A text (SMS 1411) by the *kisaeng* Hanu (16<sup>th</sup> century) is translated as follows by Contogenis and Choe (1997:34):

#### **Why Freeze?**

Why freeze to sleep?

What good are dreams of frost?

Having no bed with quilted birds,

Must I sleep in the cold?

Today, I felt the freezing rain.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication at SOAS, University of London, Spring 2014.

Tonight, I'll have a sleep that thaws.

The reader may feel reminded of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy-tale *The Little Match Girl*, and note how pitiable and lachrymose the tone in a *keisaeng* poem can be; he/she may also wonder how the "sleep that thaws" is attained.

However, the same poem looks quite logical in a translation by O'Rourke, who adds the context that the poem is an answer to the scholar Im Che (1549-1587) who had written a poem (SMS 965) ending with the lines "Today I met with chilly showers: shall I freeze in bed tonight?"<sup>5</sup> The expression "chilly showers" is a pun on 'Hanu', the *keisaeng*'s name which carries this meaning. O'Rourke translates the poem as follows:

What's all this about freezing in bed,  
why should you freeze in bed tonight?  
Where's your duck-embroidered pillow, your kingfisher quilt: why do you say you'll freeze?  
Today you met  
Cold Rain; perhaps you'll melt in bed tonight.<sup>6</sup>

Although it may be as simple a case as one translation being better than the other – a position that I would defend mostly because O'Rourke knew of the extra-textual reference to the *keisaeng*'s name – an interlinear word-for-word translation<sup>7</sup> helps to clarify some of the difficulties of interpretation in this poem:

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<sup>5</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 87).

<sup>6</sup> 2002:78, No. 167. Compare also the following translation by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:280) which exhibits yet another two differences from O'Rourke's translation. In my view, this is the closest translation, but O'Rourke's works better as an English-language poem:

Why should you freeze in bed?  
Why should you sleep that way?  
With my duck-embroidered pillow  
and jade-green quilt,  
there's no reason to freeze tonight.  
Since you have met cold rain today  
you'll melt in bed tonight.

<sup>7</sup> Rutt uses the same procedure to explain phonological aspects of a famous *sijo* by Yang Saŏn (1998:21).

<i>Ŏi</i>	<i>ŏrŏ</i>	<i>chari</i>	<i>mŭsŭ il</i>	<i>ŏrŏ</i>	<i>chari</i>
Why	freeze	sleep	which circumstance	freeze	sleep
<i>Wŏnangch'im</i>	<i>pich'nigŭm<sup>8</sup> il</i>	<i>ŏdŭi</i>	<i>tugo</i>	<i>ŏrŏ</i>	<i>chari</i>
Mandarin duck pillow	jade green quilt	(some)where	put	freeze	sleep
<i>Onŭrŭn</i>	<i>ch'anbi</i>	<i>majjasini</i>	<i>noga</i>	<i>chalkka hanora</i>	
Today	cold rain	were struck (because)	melt	sleep (I wonder if)	

The text exemplifies a number of the difficulties mentioned above. The subject is not grammatically explicit throughout, so there is no direct clue as to who the verbs refer to. The combination of the verbs ‘freeze’ and ‘sleep’ is unusual and therefore not unambiguous; likewise the term *il* covers a wide range of meanings so Contogenis and Choe’s translation, “what good are...?” is not impossible theoretically. The first word of the second line is relatively straightforward, the second allows for two options: “kingfisher quilt” or “jade-green quilt”.<sup>9</sup> More difficult are the next two words, since the *ŏdŭi* can mean both ‘where’ in the interrogative sense, or ‘somewhere’, hence, both O’Rourke’s choice of “where’s your” (literally: “where did you put...”), and the choice of Kim’s translation in the previous footnote – “with my ...pillow etc.” (a shortening of literally: “I will put the pillow etc. somewhere and...”) – are entirely reasonable. Given O’Rourke’s observation that the mandarin duck symbolizes conjugal affection, the expression is mocking either way, though with a slightly different nuance. “Quilted birds”, however, seems an incorrect translation. Finally, translation of the third line is contingent upon the solutions found for the previous sections of the text.

Contogenis and Choe translate another *kisaeng* poem (SMS 1216) by Songi (dates unknown) as follows (1997:65):

<sup>8</sup> 翡翠衾 – kingfisher/jade – green/kingfisher – quilt

<sup>9</sup> The first choice may seem suggested by the previous mention of birds, the ‘mandarin ducks’ just before; however, the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* does not list any common symbolic meaning attached to the kingfisher, so I consider it likely that the word is used in the meaning of the colour without any reference to the bird.

### So, You Can Tell

So, you can tell I'm a pine,  
but what kind do you take me for?  
I have grown tall and wide  
overlooking this precipice.

And you, prentice, from below the timber  
road, wish a pruning blade on me.

Again, the reader is likely to come away with a vague feeling of pity for the *kisaeng* who seems to lament nothing less than the threat of physical harm from the male prentice who apparently desires her extermination.

A different picture is evoked by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:281) who notes that the author's name, Songi,<sup>10</sup> literally means 'pine' and the word *sol* used for 'pine' in the poem is a pun on her name:

They call me pine, every one.  
Yet what kind of pine can I be  
but the one tall and spreading  
on the diff a thousand feet high?  
The boy woodcutter may try his little sickle  
but I am far beyond his reach.

Playful aloofness replaces the tearful mood and the meaning of the text as a whole changes completely. In the introduction to their collection, Contogenis and Choe set out a somewhat dubious comparison: "What can we conjecture about the current appeal of kisaeng poetry? Can a contemporary American woman compare herself to a kisaeng? Despite their emergence from

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<sup>10</sup> 松伊 – pine – that.

widely differing cultures and histories, one cannot help noting a certain ambiguity that is creatively endured by both groups of women” (1997:13). The readers’ conclusion on this question will undoubtedly be influenced to a great degree by the authors’ translation choices, which is why I have chosen these texts as examples here.

### **3.2 Sijo writing through the eras**

Although we cannot speak of readily distinguishable eras in the history of sijo writing, tendencies and preoccupations can be observed as particular to certain time periods; it is in respect of this that this section seeks to provide a brief overview. I am especially interested in how commentators differ in their assessments of the aesthetic merits of each era’s works. The problems with historical documentation have been discussed in Chapter 2.3, and for the purpose of this section the common ascriptions in the anthologies will be presumed to be correct – where these are fundamentally put into doubt much of any discussion loses its basis. As a general tendency, there is less doubt about ascriptions as we progress chronologically.

The group of sijo considered to date from the late Koryŏ (918-1392) is variously seen as comprising only the seven authors who died before the end of the dynasty, or as including all who were born before its end, bringing the tally to fifteen altogether. Due to the small number of poets – all of whom were educated scholars – and extant texts, the era can be considered just the starting point of sijo, providing a model of texts, for the most part, that are “expressive of the mutability of human affairs, especially related to the decline of the kingdom” (Jaihiun Joyce Kim 1986:1), texts that are “conventional in their imagery and most of [which] have political references” (Rutt 1998:4).

The early period of the Chosŏn dynasty – the 15<sup>th</sup> century – ushered in changes that are reflected in the sijo writing of the era: most importantly the implementation of Confucianism (although Confucian themes appear also in some of the Koryŏ sijo). The period is marked by the



invention of the Korean alphabet in 1446; *sijo* from the period prominently feature themes of loyalty, peace and patriotism (Jaihiun Joyce Kim 1986:17).

The 16<sup>th</sup> century, a period of political factionalism that ended with the Imjin Wars from 1592 until 1598, stands out for an abundance of extant *sijo*. Korean commentators such as Jaihiun Joyce Kim see it as the “golden era” of *sijo* writing, despite – “despite” rather than “because of”, as the Western reader may think – the fact that “[t]he neo-Confucian philosophy which governed the thoughts of the times tended to develop the *sijo* toward ideological transmission rather than the emotional expression of man”. Kim goes on to note that a “tendency of didacticism in literature prevailed among the Confucian scholars,” but he insists that their writings can stand on their own as works of art (1986:35). It is also the era of many of the famous poems written by *kisaeng*. In a discussion of the *kisaeng* poet Hwang Chini (?-1530),<sup>11</sup> Kevin O’ Rourke dismisses the Korean view on didactic texts, stating that “[t]he *sijo* poets of Hwang Chini’s generation lack distinction”, establishing that “[s]*i*jo in Chini’s age was still in its developing, didactic, moralizing phase”, and suggesting that *sijo* flowered only from the next generation onwards, that is, from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (2004:105); I will return to this debate in the last section. Jaihiun Joyce Kim himself seems to agree with O’Rourke and revoke his earlier pronouncement when, in a section specifically about *kisaeng* poets, he somewhat contradictorily contrasts the “naked truth and genuine feelings” in the *kisaeng* *sijo* with the “stock imagery and trite sermonizings most of the scholars employed in their writing” (1986:273). Rutt expresses himself in more reserved terms when he concedes that “some of the most attractive of all *sijo* were written between the time of the invention of the alphabet and the time of the Japanese invasions at the end of the sixteenth century”, pointing to Chŏng Ch’öl (1536-1593) and Hwang Chini specifically, although he later remarks about “[t]wo or three [outstanding] writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”, and proposes Yun Sŏndo (1587-1671) as possibly the greatest of all *sijo* writers (1998:4-5). Incidentally, Jaihiun Joyce Kim, on the same question, remarks that “[a]long with Chŏng, Ch’öl and Yun, Sŏndo, Pak [Inno (1561-1642)] is regarded as one of the

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<sup>11</sup> An overview of the calculations regarding Hwang Chini’s dates is found in O’Rourke (2004:101-2).

three greatest poets of the Yi dynasty” (1986:102). On Pak Inno, O’Rourke mentions that “[h]e is highly regarded as a *kasá* poet, but his *shijo* are considered too didactic and moralistic and too filled with Chinese allusions and sentiments” (2002:81); Rutt likewise considers that “[Pak’s] work is mostly disfigured by musty didacticism” (1998: note to poem No. 41).

The period spanning the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was marked by the preceding invasions of the Japanese and later of the Manchu (1627 and 1636) that wreaked havoc on the country. The era saw the emergence of middle class writers; its *sijo* deal with a resignation “to the mutability of things and the evanescence of life” (Jaihiun Joyce Kim 1986:93). Although the exceptional writings of Yun Sŏndo are frequently emphasized, more generally Rutt points out “a tendency [before the end of the seventeenth century] to deal in conventional fancies rather than produce poetry from experience” (1998:5).

Finally, scholars have come to ambiguous conclusions about the era from the early 18<sup>th</sup> until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Chosŏn dynasty neared its end. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *sijo* increased in popularity and spread to the general populace; it was the time of the compilation of *sijo* anthologies, the rise of the middle class and private sponsorship of *chŏngga* performed by *kagae*k and *kisaeng*. Rutt sees the era as a time “when Korean culture blossomed again in forms more distinctive than anything seen in the peninsula since the kings of Silla had deliberately adopted the fashions of T’ang China in the eighth century” (1998:5), although he holds that “the nineteenth century marked a decline in the vigor of most Korean arts. In *sijo* the images became stereotyped [...] and elegance, however vapid, came to be more esteemed than content” (1998:6). O’Rourke points out that half of the extant *sijo* canon is of unknown authorship and proposes that all these poems may have originated no earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He notes the use of a new type of language in *sijo* of the era that gave it “an immediacy and relevance that it had not hitherto possessed and the characteristic sense of wry humor that has distinguished the form ever since” (2002:159). Jaihiun Joyce Kim, meanwhile, emphasizes the decline of *sijo* during the 19<sup>th</sup> century which he attributes to the influx of Western literary thought, as well as “internal

disturbances” as a consequence of which, “the sijo gradually withdrew into its shell, ending up being sung instead of new ones being created”. He adds that “[o]nly a handful of figures stood their ground as champions to preserve the heritage of the sijo” (1986:187).

As I hope to have demonstrated, scholars’ diverging assessments of the works produced in each era are mostly based on differing judgments about the originality of the aesthetic content, as well as the distinction between a poetic and a didactic mode in sijo, the latter of which is evaluated positively by Jaihiun Joyce Kim, but negatively by O’Rourke. Opinions about the peak of sijo writing, then, diverge considerably: Kim places it squarely in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Rutt likewise tends towards this time. O’Rourke, however, while not denying the significance of certain writers in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizes the anonymous sijo canon from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I will return to this debate in the final section of this chapter.

### **3.3 Themes and symbolism in sijo**

While I have established that shorter sijo anthologies may be seen as “greatest hits compilations” in their selection of examples that will usually aim to present a diverse picture of sijo writing, the truth is that the majority of texts in an encyclopaedia like the *Sijo munhak sajŏn* (Chŏng Pyŏnguk (ed.) 1966) come closer to “filler tracks” and hardly go beyond being “bankrupt reworking[s] of the same old ideas” – to borrow Rutt’s (1998:6) expression. It is debatable, then, whether creativity and ingenuity are at the core of sijo writing. While there are countless examples of truly inspired and unique sijo – instances of the genre becoming a rich ground of creative diversity – the genericity of the vast majority of texts allows us to survey some of the more common themes and symbols in sijo for a greater understanding of the sijo text’s aesthetic.

Not every sijo can be classified according to its subject: The content of sijo is as diverse as the biographies, preoccupations, and class affiliations of their authors. While in some texts the subject matter is immediately apparent, others express philosophical notions on a more abstract level that defies easy classification. Still, a number of categories and topics can be usefully

established and discussed. In the following, I distinguish different popular topics in *sijo* following thematic categories often found in anthologies (cf. Rutt 1998:9, O'Rourke 2002:24) and discuss the way some of these topics are treated in Korean *sijo*.<sup>12</sup> I will discuss each topic starting with a poem from that category, based on my own classification, and as I discuss the example texts, some of the ways in which *sijo* achieve their effect should become clear;<sup>13</sup> note, however, that as there is considerable overlap many texts could be assigned to two or more categories.

There are other ways to look at *sijo* texts. Song Chonggwan, for example, reconstructs aspects of culture in Korea – what he terms the “life world” of pre-modern Koreans (based on Husserl) – including customs, holidays as well as information on food, clothes and shelter, faith, games, agriculture, consciousness and ceremony, norms, and so on through *sijo* texts (2002). McCann points out that there is a tendency for many *sijo* texts to be appreciated exclusively on their perceived merit as historical documents, which is problematic in view of the constructed nature of *sijo*'s historical reality (1998:ix). The ascription problems of many *sijo* make this take even more complex, so my discussion gives primacy to the aesthetic criterion in the evaluation of *sijo* poems.

## Historical *sijo*

(SMS 18), the mother of Chǒng Mongju (undated):

White heron, do not venture  
into the valley where crows fight.  
  
The angry crows there will be  
jealous of your whiteness.  
  
I fear lest your dean-washed body

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<sup>12</sup> I limit myself to a selection of these thematic categories, as discussing all of them is beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> I have selected the example poems in a randomized fashion; as I speak about *sijo* as an abstraction, any randomly chosen *sijo* should serve to exemplify a point.

be stained with black.<sup>14</sup>

A limited number of *sijo* comment on historical events such as the downfall of the Koryŏ dynasty or the Hideyoshi invasion. Although ascription especially for the older texts is extremely doubtful, these texts are especially well-known. Chŏng Mongju (1337-1392) was a Koryŏ-era statesman assassinated for his unwillingness to be co-opted by the Yi Pangwŏn faction that engineered the overthrow of the government and ended the Koryŏ dynasty. This poem is said to have been written by his mother as a warning of imminent political danger; a second interpretation cited by O'Rourke sees it as a more general admonition of virtue (2002:32). McCann discusses the various *sijo* surrounding Chŏng Mongju at length (2000:144-7), and notes the absence of any mention of these *sijo* in the official record.

### Political *sijo* and *sijo* of loyalty

(SMS 580) Song Siyŏl (1607-1689):

I rose high in my beloved's favour  
and I've trusted him ever since  
Now I am out of his good graces,  
on whom does he rely?  
Should he not have loved me from the first  
I must feel much less sorry.<sup>15</sup>

*Sijo* do not have to comment on great historical events to have a political dimension. A great number of *sijo* texts deal, in a more or less explicit manner, with contemporary political events, in some cases taking the form of a plea to the ruler, appealing unjust treatment or raising accusations of deceit and intrigue. Song Siyŏl, who my example poem comes from, was a royal tutor to King Hyojong (ruled 1649-1659) and was present in the siege of Namhan Mountain

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<sup>14</sup> Translation by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:11).

<sup>15</sup> Translation by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:171).

Fortress during the second Manchu invasion. It is difficult not to relate the text to his life circumstances and especially the fact that he fell out of favour with the later King Sukchong (ruled 1674-1720) and was forced to commit suicide at the king's command. Political poems, as McCann points out (1998:ix), are often extremely malleable in their interpretation, so that the question of ascription becomes crucial, partly owed to the fact that political commentary was shrouded in allegory, and that the Korean term *nim*, pervasively used in *sijo* texts, can refer to a lover, but also to a ruler, the person that the narrator's fate depends on. That is how a change of ascription can quickly turn a poem declaring loyalty into one that mourns separation from a lover. In fact, a great number of the loyalty poems are virtually indistinguishable from love poems, except where specific names are mentioned or reference to specific events is made, so McCann (1998:viii-x) is certainly right to point out that entire versions of history can be constructed merely through the ascription of *sijo*. Among political *sijo*, we can distinguish texts that declare loyalty or provide justifications, texts containing warnings, and texts commenting on the state of affairs. The tone in texts of the first category tends towards pathos and outright adulation, as in the following example (SMS 611):

My prancing horse ages idling about.  
My sharp-edged sword rusts unused.  
The heartless months and years only  
prompt my hair to turn grey.  
I fear that I shall not be able  
to repay the favors the king has bestowed on me.<sup>16</sup>

The reported author of this text is Yu Hyögyön (1616-1680), a governor, minister and military official. The text points out the narrator's dissatisfaction at being useless, unable to serve his king with his sharp-edged sword and possibly his horse – if the text was written after his exile to Cheju Island both of these are most useless indeed. The final section is typical in its indirectness: The

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<sup>16</sup> Translation by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:174).

king's decision is not questioned in any way, but rather the unfortunate side effects – not being able to serve him anymore – are cited for the same effect. Secondly, texts with political warnings contain especially poignant twists in their final section that convey a sense of looming threat and even hostility. Finally, the more uninvolved commentaries often employ a bitter tone that does not shy away from drastic images, often likening moral debasement to dirt, mud and so on.

### Love sijo and sijo of parting

(SMS 1594) Yi Myŏngha (1595-1645):

I cling to your sleeve;  
    heed my tears and do not go.  
       The sun has already  
    sunk beyond the distant hills.  
       If you trim the flickering guest-room lamp  
    and stay awake you'll know my pain.<sup>17</sup>

Love is universally one of the main topics in poetry and sijo are no exception to this. If something fundamentally sets sijo writing apart from other traditions, it may be the fact that texts can sometimes be quite ambiguous in whether they refer to romantic love, filial piety – love for one's parents – or loyalty, love for one's ruler and so on. Part of this is owed to the stylized language in which love is treated in sijo, in tune with keeping Confucian decorum. Indeed, if we look at the cardinal relationships of Confucianism and see love sijo as one expression of these, it may be no surprise that they are conceptualized in similar terms even though they present very different types of love to the Western mind.<sup>18</sup> Yet, there are a great number of texts like the one in this example that leave no doubt about the kind of love that is the topic: romantic love, to be

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<sup>17</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 69).

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that a current of evolution theory holds romantic love to be a redirection of mother-child affection; romantic love would then have originated in the bond between mother and child rather than as an extension of sexuality. This idea was first proposed by Eibl-Eibesfeldt, the Austrian founder of the field of ethology, in *Love and Hate: The Natural History of Behavior Patterns* (1971).

distinguished from other types of love.<sup>19</sup> The author of this *sijo* is Yi Myŏngha, a notable scholar and statesman who has left us a number of love *sijo*, as well as other types of *sijo* texts – altogether eight – to his name. In this text, the first section presents the scene – a lover who leaves, instead of staying for the night, as the second section makes clear. The final section serves to illustrate the loneliness: the guest-room or inn is a frequent symbol of such loneliness, or sometimes homesickness. The final section may alternatively be interpreted as “that is when you’ll know/you’ll regret” instead of the translation chosen by Rutt, which would then suggest that it is the person who parts rather than the narrator who will suffer later.

Songs of parting constitute a special type within the love *sijo*. O’Rourke notes that love poems by known authors tend to be exclusively parting *sijo* as the love is never realized and remains unfulfilled. Exceptions exist though; O’Rourke notes how a poem (SMS 1427) by Hwang Chini stands out in this sense: “*Kisaeng* poetry traditionally took the point of view of the woman pining for a lover who does not come, or lamenting her fate in being abandoned by some heartless paramour. Here the speaker has taken the initiative in ending the relationship, and she asks some fundamental questions about the psychology of love and freedom” (2004:110).

The following anonymous text (SMS 306) is a more conventional take on the parting theme:

I’ll catch the wild goose,  
befriend him, tame him.  
I’ll teach him well the road to where my true love dwells.  
At night,  
when thoughts of love arise in my mind, the wild goose can take a message.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> I have not delved into the question of whether such love is homosexual or heterosexual, but the distinction is inconsequential for my purposes. There are some poems which suggest homosexuality, for example when a poem written by a man talks about a boy in erotic terms (e.g. SMS 64), but in many cases this may equally have to do with translation choices, ascription problems, the author assuming a persona, or the fact that the assignment of gender can be difficult (cf. O’Rourke 2002:14). It is likely that overt homosexual expression would have been deemed unsuitable in *sijo* with known authorship. Pratt and Rutt usefully summarize the ambiguous status of homosexuality in Chosŏn Korea (1999:167).

<sup>20</sup> Translation by O’Rourke (2002:195, No. 595).



Popular symbols in parting *sijo* include geese, carp and cuckoos. Wild geese represent the advent of fall, the bringing of news, close friendship or deep love.<sup>21</sup> Wild geese and carp also represent communication between parted lovers (O'Rourke 2002:195), the cuckoo signals the advent of spring,<sup>22</sup> although its call which by Koreans is perceived as similar to crying also represents unhappy love (O'Rourke 2002:194). Paulownia trees are another popular symbol; being, as Rutt says, (1998, No. 99) the resting place for the mythical phoenix, itself a symbol of conjugal affection, the empty paulownia tree or rain drops falling on paulownia leaves are a powerful image representing a lover that did not come or is absent, thus making the paulownia tree superfluous and painful as a constant reminder of this absence.

Love *sijo* are among the most diverse in tone and style out of all *sijo* topics. While the default tone is yearning for an idealized and sublime love, some of the most famous and rightfully cherished *sijo* manage to hide a suggestive content below the surface of the overt meaning – a good example is the *sijo* exchange discussed above (pp. 79-9), between the scholar Im Che and the female entertainer Hanu:

(SMS 965) Im Che (1549-1587):

The northern sky seemed dear,  
so I set off without a cloak;  
But snow has appeared on the mountains  
and cold rain fills the fields.  
Today I met with chilly showers:<sup>23</sup>  
shall I freeze in bed tonight?<sup>24</sup>

To this Hanu (16<sup>th</sup> century) is purported to have answered with the following *sijo* (SMS 1411):

<sup>21</sup> Wŏn Pyŏngo, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry *kirŏgi* (wild goose).

<sup>22</sup> Wŏn Pyŏngo, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry *ppŏkkugi* (cuckoo).

<sup>23</sup> The words used are *ch'an pi*, the native Korean equivalent of the Sino-Korean characters that constitute the female entertainer's name *hanu* (寒雨 – cold – rain).

<sup>24</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 87).

What's all this about freezing in bed,  
 why should you freeze in bed tonight?  
 Where's your duck-embroidered pillow, your kingfisher quilt: why do you say you'll freeze?  
 Today you met  
 Cold Rain; perhaps you'll melt in bed tonight.<sup>25</sup>

The *sijo* ascribed to *kisaeng* courtesans often display clever taunting puns, double entendres and plays on the assonance of Sino-Korean characters, as in the following example, also discussed above (p. 80), (SMS 1216) by the courtesan Songi whose name means 'pine tree':

They call me pine, every one.  
 Yet what kind of pine can I be  
 but the one tall and spreading  
 on the diff a thousand feet high?  
 The boy woodcutter may try his little sickle  
 but I am far beyond his reach.<sup>26</sup>

Such *sijo* confirm the notion of courtesans as a class of educated and ingenuous *sijo* writers with an unusual degree of agency and intellectual independence (cf. Contogenis and Choe 1997:12-7). At other times though, *kisaeng sijo* are completely devoid of any flirtatious mood and quite moving and heartfelt. And at the other end of the spectrum we have poems of unknown authorship and *sasŏl sijo* (discussed in more detail below) which venture into territory unknown to the Confucian scholar in their depictions of love that range from betraying an earthiness far removed from the fancies of the Confucian cardinal virtues to outright explicitness, to the point where "a few [anonymous *sijo* love poems] are even quite gross" (O'Rourke 2002:178).

### **Sijo of mortality**

<sup>25</sup> Translation by O'Rourke (2002:78, No. 167).

<sup>26</sup> Translation by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:281).

(SMS 536) Kim Sujang (1690-?):

My ageing affections  
I'll beguile with chrysanthemums,  
My tangled skein of worries  
I'll beguile with ink drawings of grapevines  
The white hair straying under my ears  
I'll beguile with one long song.<sup>27</sup>

Sijo about human mortality have been great in number over the centuries, and some of the most famous sijo fall into this category. Kevin O'Rourke points out that the treatment of the topic often takes the form of "mourning the inevitability of human mortality [...] in the process revealing a dry sense of humour and a certain dedication to the principles of *carpe diem*" (2002:175). He includes enumerating the seasons, fallen leaves or petals, white hair and the passing of time as typical symbols of the topic. Often the ageing of humans is contrasted with the renovation taking place in nature. The topic is treated both as a lament of one's own ageing, but also in lamenting the passing of tutors, lovers and rulers, comparable to the Western concept of the threnody. The tone in such poems ranges from despair to confusion to dry humour, and the example picked exemplifies such a *carpe diem* mentality. Comparison with other translations and the original text make it clear that the first line uses chrysanthemums as a symbol of seclusion: "Among the noblemen the chrysanthemum was widely associated with the image of the secluded scholar".<sup>28</sup> In other words the narrator has chosen retirement as a solution to the ailment of his heart, wine to comfort his worries,<sup>29</sup> and music to comfort him from the reality of ageing. In this category, the sijo's distinctiveness lies mainly in the pictures chosen for their symbolic value.

## Music

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<sup>27</sup> Translation by Rutt (1998, No. 115).

<sup>28</sup> Yi Uchöl, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry *kukhwa* ("chrysanthemum").

<sup>29</sup> O'Rourke translates *mukp'odo*, the sense of which is not entirely clear, as "the dark grape"; it is likely that the passage is a reference to wine.

(SMS 99) Kim Sŏnggi (18<sup>th</sup> century):

Cast out in the countryside, far from the world,  
I keep my company with seagulls;  
I set my little fishing boat adrift  
and play on my jade flute.  
Perhaps, no other worldly pleasure  
appeals to me more.<sup>30</sup>

The theme of music in *sijo* most often takes the form of the narrator playing an instrument or singing as part of an exalted mood, often in connection to drinking and the appreciation of nature, but also in combination with the theme of retreat and solitude. The example poem is of the latter kind. The countryside – Sino-Korean *kangho*,<sup>31</sup> literally “rivers and lakes”, establishes the scene and the rustic retreat theme, enforced by the symbol of the seagull as “the friend of the simple man in nature”. The fishing boat and the music in the middle section complete and enhance the picture, while the final section comes to an assessment as it introduces the word *hŭng*, – joy, ecstasy. The author was a famous musician, versed in playing the *kŏmun’go* zither, the *t’ungso* bamboo flute and the *pip’a* lute, and renowned as a *kŏmun’go* teacher. After his passing, students of his assembled the music they had learned from him into a score book.<sup>32</sup> Among the themes explored in *sijo*, music is the one approached in the most linear manner and is hardly ever subject to the semantic subversion that O’Rourke mentions when he talks of conventional symbols being used in an ironic way (2002:20). Instruments that feature prominently in *sijo* are those associated with Confucian scholars, notably the *kŏmun’go*, but also mythical instruments often with Chinese associations.

### Sijo of solitude

<sup>30</sup> Translation by Jaihiun Joyce Kim (1986:234).

<sup>31</sup> 江湖 (river – lake); “a reference to a district in China with three rivers and five lakes, with the secondary meaning of the secluded world of the hermit” (O’Rourke 2002:171).

<sup>32</sup> Kim Yŏngun, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘Kim Sŏnggi’.

(SMS 2340)Chǒng Ch'öl (1536-1593):

Butterflies hover in pairs where flower blossoms are thick;

orioles perch in pairs on the branches of green willows.

Flying creatures, crawling creatures, all are in pairs.

Tell me,

why am I alone without a mate?<sup>33</sup>

The topic of solitude is taken up in different ways in *sijo*. While solitude is dreaded when it is seen to be related to feelings of loyalty – usually in exile – or explicitly connected to love, parting and longing for a lover, it is also depicted as a kind of exaltation when it is experienced as an ecstatic state of being one with nature, being rid of the burden, worries and problems of civilization in rustic retirement, or enjoying wine in any of these configurations. However, there are also texts that make solitude the topic itself without any of these colourings, texts which range from a peculiar austerity in which the solitary condition is pondered upon, but also vague feelings of bleakness, distress and homesickness that may be seen as a variation on the involuntary exile theme, but without a connection to falling out of favour with royalty or missing a lover.

This particular *sijo* achieves its effect through a clutter of duplicates and parallelisms in the first two lines in which the natural world is described – an effect which is only partly recovered in the translation through the parallel construction of the first three lines' beginnings. The first line of the Korean reads like this (duplicate syllables have been underlined):

*Hwajachak pōmnabi ssangssang*

*yuch'ōngch'ōng kkwoekkori<sup>34</sup> ssangssang*

Not only does the choice of the word order render a pair of grammatically parallel sentences, but the accumulation of duplicate syllables further illustrates on a phonetic level how everything is in pairs. The second line likewise starts with two terms constructed in parallel, rendered elegantly as

<sup>33</sup> Translation by O'Rourke (2002:67, No. 118).

<sup>34</sup> The oriole often appears in traditional Korean poems as an especially lovely bird noted for its bright and beautiful singing (Wŏn Pyōngŏ, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry *kkwoekkori* (oriole)).

“Flying creatures, crawling creatures”, and contains another duplicate syllable. Only the final line, contrasting the speaker’s solitude to the natural state of being paired, contains no such pairs, but is composed of only heterogeneous short words. The poem, then, is a good example of how a great *sijo* poet such as Chŏng Ch’öl made use of grammatical and phonetic arrangements to underscore the meaning communicated in the text.

### ***Sasŏl sijo***

(SMS 766) Kim Sujang (1690 - ?):

The peony is the king of flowers,  
the sunflower is a loyal, filial subject.  
  
The plum is a reduse, the apricot a mean-spirited wretch. The lotus is a lady, the chrysanthemum a  
sage. The camellia is an indigent scholar, the gourd flower an old man. The China pink is a youth, the  
sea-rose a young girl.  
  
Special among the flowers  
is the pear blossom poet, while the red peach, the fairyland peach, and the three blossom peach all  
are devotees of beauty.<sup>35</sup>

The *sasŏl sijo* is a special form of *sijo*, the formal definition of which I discussed in Chapter 1.2 (see also McCann 1988:19-20; Um Hae-kyung 2007:36-7). While the format does not necessarily bear on the content, and while famous poets such as Chŏng Ch’öl (1536-1593) also wrote *sasŏl sijo*, it became especially popular towards the end of the Chosŏn dynasty; many *sasŏl sijo*, then, are of anonymous authorship and feature the dry wit characteristic of the anonymous *sijo* texts from the era. The structural setup of the different sections of a *sijo* text is seen to be left intact in *sasŏl sijo*; indeed, in this example we can identify the typical structure of an opening statement (the first two lines), a (lengthy) elaboration on the same topic in the second section (lines 3-5), the

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<sup>35</sup> Translation by O’Rourke (2002:123, No. 308).

twist – “special among the flowers”<sup>36</sup> – followed by the conclusion which proceeds to the flowers that stand out from all those mentioned before because they are “devotees of beauty”. With its disproportionate middle section, this text exhibits a common arrangement of *sasöl* sijo: the extended content of especially the second line often takes the form of lists or enumerations, reminiscent of the literary device of catalog verse in Western literature, defined in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as follows: “[V]erse that presents a list of people, objects, or abstract qualities. Such verse exists in almost all literatures and is of ancient origin”.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the present example calls to mind the catalog of trees that precedes the myth of Cyparissos in Book X of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (verses 86-105).

### 3.4 The aesthetic of the sijo text

After laying out some of the tools and bricks of sijo writing in the previous section, I now turn to a discussion of the aesthetic of the sijo text. In particular, I am concerned with the questions of where the aesthetic pleasure in reading, reciting or singing a sijo text may come from, content-wise, and, to a lesser degree, what distinguishes the sijo aesthetic from that of other poems both in the West and the East. As becomes clear from the previous section, the wide range of topics creates an equally wide range of aesthetic approaches, not least since a love poem often achieves its effect in a different way and departs from a different outlook than one on solitude.

Richard Rutt and Kevin O’Rourke exhibit a surprising degree of disagreement in their outlook on the sijo aesthetic, and part of O’Rourke’s analysis can be understood as a direct criticism of the former. O’Rourke delves into the topic more deeply and his analysis of the aesthetic of sijo texts gives way to actual sijo criticism: O’Rourke explains his idea of the sijo aesthetic based on a range of poems held as prime examples, exemplifying what he considers essential to the charm of sijo. His analysis seeks for an essence, abstracting from a number of extant poems. Outlining the

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<sup>36</sup> While in Korean the twist ‘*i chung*’ means not more than “among them”, the translation chosen by O’Rourke emphasizes the rhetorical function of the twist.

<sup>37</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; URL: <http://www.britannica.com/art/catalog-verse> (accessed 20 May 2017).

components of the aesthetic of sijo texts, he then has tools by means of which he can evaluate the quality of any particular sijo text.

Sijo are generally seen as simple, direct and refined, and commentators agree on such an immediacy within sijo: As a universal rule, a sijo contains “a firsthand account of [the shijo poet’s] personal experience of life and emotion” (O’Rourke, 2002:11), or “an explicit statement of the poet’s concern” (Rutt 1998:12). On top of the idiosyncrasy of sijo’s sense structure (which has been elucidated in Chapter 1.2) that in itself accounts for part of sijo’s unique effect, O’Rourke insists on “ironic wit in the fusion of image and idea” (2002:13-5) during the final section of a sijo as one integral feature of the poem’s charm, and, to a certain degree, a kind of yardstick through which its merit can be evaluated. In this, he writes in stark contrast to Rutt who writes the following:

The conclusion of a sijo is seldom epigrammatic or witty. A witty close to a sentence would have been foreign to the genius of stylized Korean diction in the great sijo periods. [...] A sijo in translation may therefore often seem to lack the firm clench that the Westerner would expect in a poem whose style and length suggest an epigram. Korean epigrammatic utterance must be sought in the homely field of proverb; the sijo is essentially aristocratic, and remained so until the awakening of a culture among the lower classes in the eighteenth century (1998:12).

As if to directly refute this claim, O’Rourke’s states that wherever sijo in translation appear inconclusive this happens because “either the translation is poor and the translator has not understood all the ironic levels of meaning, or the original poem is not a good example of the genre. To say that *shijo* appear inconclusive because they are not witty is to misread the facts completely. Wit is integral” (2002:12). The fact that the two scholars almost seem to be talking about different genres apparently results from their differing judgments of the sijo aesthetic, and maybe to a lesser degree to the controversies about ascription which were much less developed during the times in which Rutt originally wrote his account. It is hard, though, to dismiss the passage by Rutt entirely, for there are sijo texts which do fit his description perfectly well. His



opinion that “the sijo is essentially aristocratic” is crucial; especially given that he considers that “the tone, subject matter, and language of many old sijo are heavily impregnated with Chinese words and ideas”. Rutt turned to sijo before comprehensive and annotated sijo encyclopaedias were published, which may be one of the reasons why to him the essentially aristocratic sijo written before sijo spread among the lower classes are the “real sijo”:<sup>38</sup>

[...]partly because the expression of the aspirations of the common people posed a threat to the order of society, the nineteenth century marked a decline in the vigor of most Korean arts. In sijo the images became stereotyped – seagulls, peach blossoms, butterflies, bamboos – and elegance, however vapid, came to be more esteemed than content.[...]the majority [of poems] display a bankrupt reworking of the same old ideas (1998:6).

O’Rourke is similarly explicit when he says that some poems are simply not good examples of the genre, that is, they are not good poems. An example may clarify the two views. The following poem by Yi Hwang (better known by his pen name T’oegye (1501-1570), (SMS 1616), fourth in the cycle *Twelve Songs of Tosan*) may well be what Rutt had in mind when he talked of an “essentially aristocratic” tradition with “stylized Korean diction”:<sup>39</sup>

There are fragrant orchids in the valley;  
nature is sweet to the ear.

There are white clouds in the mountain; nature is sweet to the eye.

In all this,

I cannot forget my beautiful lord?<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> As hinted at earlier, this view probably departs from the idea that the ascription of Koryŏ-era sijo was accurate, which was a widely believed idea at the time Rutt first published his commentary. Locating the “real sijo” in a past long before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, then, is increasingly difficult, the later we assume the first sijo to have originated.

<sup>39</sup> There is evidence that Rutt’s ideas on which sijo were representative changed in his later years. In a 2008 interview, he had the following to say about T’oegye: “T’oegye was a man of remarkable imagination. You can’t argue from the existence of two or three collections by distinguished men like T’oegye that everybody did it [author sijo texts] because it’s precisely that he did things that everybody didn’t do!” (2008:141)

<sup>40</sup> Translation by O’Rourke (2002:52, No. 71).

O'Rourke considers the poetry cycle that this poem comes from to carry a message that "may have little appeal to the modern reader" (2002:52). Elsewhere he goes on to write:

The *sijo* poets of Hwang Chini's generation lack distinction. Yi Hwang (1501–1570), the great T'oegye, is her most illustrious contemporary, but his fame rests on his scholarship rather than his poetry skills. The *Twelve Songs of Tosan*, renowned though they may be as blueprints of literati lifestyle, are hardly great poems; they are much too deeply weighed down by conceptual Confucian lore (2004:105).

Clearly, O'Rourke is not a fan of the *Twelve Songs of Tosan*, and they may be the "poems that are not a good example of the genre" that he was referring to. We can mix things up further by adding Jaihiun Joyce Kim to the equation. He has the following to say about the *sijo* by Confucian scholars such as Yi Hwang: "[They] not only employed the *sijo* as a vehicle to propound their philosophy but also produced some of the finest works of art *per se*" (1986:35). Finally, Rutt points out that "[w]here there is no developed practice of criticism, professionalism has its own dangers" (1998:6). Who is right?

The anthropologist strives to interpret and represent culture on its own terms. To see this, or rather the contrast when this is not applied, we need only imagine that an ethnomusicologist disregard all the Korean music that does not withstand Western aesthetic criteria: arguably no part of the Korean canon of court ritual music would be deemed worthy of consideration, and the Confucian ritual music *Munmyo cheryeak* would likely be dismissed as "pompous", "a bankrupt reworking of the same old ideas" "too deeply weighed down by conceptual Confucian lore", to put the matter a bit hyperbolically. It follows that asking "What did people like in *sijo*?" would be more likely to be asked by an anthropologist, but literature scholars have sometimes adopted this perspective to great benefit. Rutt's understanding of *sijo* on their own terms, as he explained in an interview shortly before he died, was greatly aided by his slow learning process, which had sensitized him to aspects of *sijo*'s aesthetic that would have stood out to scholars in Chosŏn times:

I was reading everything I possibly could. I was reading a great deal, as far as I could get it, of what I now realize was a comment or description of Neo-Confucian thinking. I had more books about China than I could get about Korea at the time. After a year, I thought, I know a bit more than just that it's difficult and it's symbolic, but I was working with the basic ideas. What you would now give to a student in one introductory lecture took me a year getting it through the eyes and nose! (2008:133)

As a result, Rutt adopted something like an anthropological perspective, which is evidenced in the following admonition about evaluating something like *sijo* through a modern lens:

I hope that Westerners who are studying Korean literature will try and get out of their minds any suggestion of moral value. "This is great writing" and I say, well, what do you mean by "great"? "This is insignificant." Why is it insignificant? I don't object to the use of a word like 'cheap' in literary criticism on occasion, but I think one has got to be very careful as to how one uses it, especially not to use it with any suggestion that this is written from the point of view of the group that are 'not cheap'. That's horrid. [...] People use a word like that without really defining it carefully. When you define it carefully, you may find that you hate it—you don't want to be associated with it. Cultural conditioning... for example, Kipling's short stories are very good work—they're brilliant, many of them—but you can't compare any apparently similar Korean piece to it, and then say look how much better Kipling is than the Korean. Because they're not really to be judged on the same basis (2008:142).

O'Rourke likewise benefits from his familiarity with other genres of Korean poetry; his book chapter on the literary merits of Hwang Chini's writings (2004:96-121) is a prime example of the advantages that spring from a synthesis of literary criticism with a systematic approach to see the subject matter through the eyes of the insider. In this, O'Rourke meticulously separates old records from contemporary ones, legend from history, wholesale appraisal from specific literary judgment, and cites contemporaneous and contemporary Korean sources at length. He criticizes the Korean experts for not digging deeper: "Contemporary critical comment on Chini's *hansi* is meager. Critics are content to feature accounts of Chini's beauty spiced with [unsubstantiated biographical tales, but] none of this tells us anything about the poems" (2004:114).

In conclusion, it is perhaps valid to speak of different types of aesthetic present in *sijo* texts, so that analysing the *sijo* aesthetic through a universal aesthetic lens can be considered a problematic undertaking. The anthropological perspective is hindered by the lack of a pre-modern Korean tradition of criticism, so it is not easy to find out what Chosŏn-era Koreans themselves might have considered essential to the *sijo* aesthetic. We can try to abstract from the poems which, as we have seen, is difficult to do due to the wide range of aesthetic differences found in the huge number of texts. What is observed in one text cannot be elevated to the status of a general rule. Maybe the devices which distinguish one *sijo* would have been rejected by another *sijo* poet. With such a range of people who wrote *sijo* it should actually be more surprising if their aesthetic criteria had all been the same. A clue comes simply from the fact that the extant texts were transmitted up to present times. This circumstance testifies to the affection people must have had for these texts; enough, at least, to remember and transmit them orally and later include them in poetry anthologies. This would suggest every extant text was transmitted because it was well-loved and considered aesthetically worthy of being documented in some way. For all the *sijo* lovers who may have found the *Twelve Songs of Tosan* as unremarkable and stolid as O'Rourke does, someone must have liked them enough to safeguard the woodblocks that document them. It could be argued that they were transmitted because they have merit as didactic "Confucian lore", rather than as well-achieved poems. But the point is the same: some people must have thought a good *sijo* was marked by its condition of being didactic "Confucian lore" rather than a well-achieved poem. There can have been no uniform formula that the *sijo* poets of old had on their minds because a unified Korean sensibility that presupposes the exceptionality of the Korean condition is a construct. Differences – in taste, aesthetic preference, sentiment and sensibility – between individual Koreans and therefore individual Korean poets must surely be greater than the difference between Koreans as a whole and those outside the tradition.

## Part II: Sung sijo in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

### Chapter 4. The genealogy of *chŏngga*

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the genealogy of sijo in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is closely tied in with the transmission of all three genres of *chŏngga*. I divide my discussion into two parts, one of a more theoretical, and one of a more technical and descriptive nature. In the first section, I introduce my own concept of the ‘genetic bottleneck’, a term I have borrowed from evolutionary biology as a metaphor for Korean traditional cultural expressions during the Japanese colonial period. Next I discuss the main questions which the accepted narrative of *chŏngga* transmission poses, and assess the Korean case in comparison to Western music history. My discussion on this is taken up again in Chapter 6 in the context of the Korean Law for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage and its impact on *chŏngga*.

In Part II of Chapter 4, I present a genealogy of *chŏngga*, subdivided into three generations. Later, in Chapter 6, I will show that, in keeping with the bottleneck metaphor, *chŏngga* singing is relatively vibrant and diverse in our present times, but much of the present practice goes back to the same origin, namely two singers who are credited with the transmission of *chŏngga* during the colonial period and who represent the link to a previous generation of *chŏngga* practice, to its heyday and original time and context – what we can call the ‘natural habitat’ of *chŏngga*. I apply the term ‘generation’ in the sense of teacher-student relationships rather than birth dates or distinctions based on age, since oral transmission, respect for one’s teacher and the concept of the teaching lineage are deeply embedded in Korean culture and, in particular, in most traditional

performing arts, hence these distinctions seem congruent with my topic. Nevertheless, overlap occurs in the cases of singers who have learned from different teachers and who, based on their age, fall between different generations. At the same time, the genealogy of *chŏngga* singers I offer is not exhaustive, particularly as we come closer to contemporary times, due in part to the sheer number of singers active in the last decades, and because of the lack of published information about contemporary singers.

## **Part I – Tradition: Theory and practice**

### **4.1 The recovery of *chŏngga* after the bottleneck**

In the English language, a range of figurative meanings are attached to the term ‘bottleneck’: literally the upper part of a bottle, it is used to refer to a glass tube used in country music for playing slide guitar, or to a ‘choke point’ in a geographical terrain such as a mountain, an obstacle that can be surmounted only through a small passage. There is also the ‘bottleneck’ from evolutionary biology which I want to use as a metaphor here. In population genetics, a bottleneck is an environmental event which drastically reduces a given population and the genetic diversity found in it. After the bottleneck event the population may either become extinct or recover with a much decreased gene pool.

Applied to my topic, the totality of Korean traditional performing arts during later Chosŏn period when *chŏngga* were arguably at their most popular and were performed by a wide range of people represents as the original population. It was performed by *kagae*, professional singers, by *kisaeng* courtesans, *sagyech’uk*, commoner status singers, and amateur singers. The period of Japanese colonial rule and the vision of modernity that it enforced upon Korea limited and suppressed a range of expressions of Korean culture, particularly genres from the folk realm such as shaman music that were seen as representative of a subversive Korean identity. The exact degree to which the decline of traditional performing arts can be ascribed to Japanese influence is debated and may at times be overstated in contemporary Korean perceptions and scholarship;

undoubtedly, material needs, the demise of aristocratic culture, and modernization, themselves owed partly to Japanese influence, also played a role. Whatever the reason, the period led to what I term a cultural bottleneck within Korean history.

It is not widely known exactly what happened to *chǒngak* genres like *sijo* that had been popular among the class of middle-status people in Chosŏn times, but Yi Pohyŏng suggests that during the colonial period they presumably lost sponsorship.<sup>1</sup> None of the sources that I have examined mention direct sanctions against *chǒngak* genres on the part of the Japanese colonial regime, so although we can chart the decline of royal patronage as a potential catalyst, we can assume that whatever negative influences the Japanese had on these genres, they were essentially of the indirect kind. At the same time it is known that the task of teaching these arts was now concentrated in a few institutions, tolerated by the Japanese, in which traditional arts were kept alive.<sup>2</sup>

After the end of the colonial era, many performance arts experienced a revival thanks to the promulgation of the Law for the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (*Munhnwajae pobobŏp*) in 1962, and a system was established which, after careful consideration of extant documentation and the advice of experts and scholars, proclaimed a number of performance arts and crafts which were deemed in danger of extinction worthwhile of being preserved. The system appoints a holder for each heritage item – often glossed as ‘intangible cultural property’ – who since the late 1970s has received a stipend and has the obligation to perform and teach the genre in the way that the documentation – in the form of written sources or memories of performers – at the time of appointment dictates.

In keeping with the analogy introduced above, the bottleneck of the colonial period in this context led to a situation in which the preserved versions of many genres from the aristocratic

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<sup>1</sup> All references to the celebrated Korean music and folklore scholar Yi Pohyŏng in this chapter stem from an interview I conducted at his house near Kongnŭng Station in Seoul on 11 August 2015.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘*chǒngak*’ with the genres it is now seen as comprising was first established in this time with the foundation of the *Chosŏn chǒngak chŏnsŭpso* (Korean Court Music Study Institute) which, however, went bankrupt in 1916; afterwards the preservation of these genres was mostly in the hands of the *Yiwangjik aakpu*, the successor of the *Changagwŏn* (Royal Music Institute). These institutions are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

realm, or genres that were concentrated in Seoul,<sup>3</sup> had to rely on a small number of people in order to reconstruct the canon which was then preserved within the system. These constituted the diminished ‘gene pool’ of performers who survived the bottleneck – it can be argued that this gene pool displayed a decreased artistic diversity, given the small number of performers who remained or who were considered relevant in the appointment process. Given the preoccupation with the concept of the *wŏnhyŏng*, a presumed original form of a given musical piece or cultural item that then becomes the official version to be preserved under the law, it seems – from an ethnomusicological perspective – a worthwhile undertaking to take a look at contemporary *chŏngga* performance in Korea and try to trace its origins. Of particular interest in this are two questions. First, what is the exact genealogy of current *chŏngga* performance, and in determining this, to find out if, indeed, all of it goes back to Ha Kyuil, a single performer who is widely regarded as the original source of all contemporary *chŏngga* performance. Second is the question about flexibility and innovation in the *chŏngga* tradition, in view of the *wŏnhyŏng* concept; in other words, whether a *chŏngga* student should sing exactly as his/her teacher.

## 4.2 Ha Kyuil – the beginning of everything

Does all contemporary *chŏngga* performance, indeed, have its origin with the teachings of Ha Kyuil (1868-1937)? There was a second singer next to Ha Kyuil, Im Kijun (1867-1940), in the early part of the 20th century. I will include him tangentially here, but he can be largely omitted in this theoretical discussion since his contribution to the transmission of the *chŏngga* canon is limited to four out of the twelve *kasa* pieces, which Ha Kyuil refused to sing, due to a perceived vulgarity in these songs. So, theoretically, contemporary *chŏngga* performance should trace back to Ha: *kagok* and *kasa* being part of Korea’s Intangible Cultural Heritage – preserved as items No.

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<sup>3</sup> Writings like Howard (2006b) paint a picture in which the various folk arts were still much more widespread in Korea after the colonial period than *chŏngga*. This is not surprising, given that Seoul took the full brunt of Japanese colonial control, so genres surviving in institutions related to the former royalty and aristocracy were left with less vitality and stood a smaller chance of not shrinking or disappearing in the colonial era. Yi Pohyŏng, however, pointed out that as a genre linked to the literati class, *chŏngga* in the countryside, less widespread in the first place, lost its foothold even quicker there than in Seoul.



30 and No. 41 under the Law for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage stipulated in 1962 – the versions that were recorded and documented as the official properties were those of the earliest holder Yi Chuhwan who had learnt exclusively from the two earlier singers. They were the only teachers at the *Yimangjik aakpu*, the main place where genres such as *chŏngga* were kept alive during the colonial period. If there were other people except these two who still sang and taught *chŏngga* during the colonial period, but Yi Chuhwan did not learn from them, it is still be possible that other *chŏngga* singers of Yi Chuhwan's or the following generation learned from those and therefore carry traces of some tradition other than that of Ha Kyuil. This is a question that Korean *kugak* scholars have only recently started to concern themselves with, although I would argue that it is a most essential question.

For our discussion, an analogy may be drawn with Western music and the teaching lineages within which many pianists trace themselves back to famous pianists and composers of the past. In comparing the situation of Ha Kyuil and Korean *chŏngga*, we might say that it is as if Chilean pianist Claudio Arrau (who can be linked all the way back to Liszt and Beethoven) had been the only known pianist to survive World War II, and that every concert pianist afterwards had learned from him or one of his students. On top of this, Arrau would also be the only one who remembers all of Beethoven's and Liszt's compositions. The point is clear: No matter how great a pianist Arrau is, if we have a choice, we would not want to rely on only one person for the transmission of not only an entire art, but also its entire repertoire. Likewise, the point is not whether Ha Kyuil was the greatest of all the *chŏngga* singers who lived at his time. In other words, it is not the question of whether the bottleneck led to decreased 'population fitness' (as population bottlenecks are prone to), or whether he was in fact the most able artist on which preservation should rely for transmission. A much simpler question would be how typical Ha Kyuil's style was, or even if his singing was representative of the singing style of his era. We can listen to his recordings, but it is hard to find any answer to the broader question because we don't know if everybody sang like he did on recordings, and not even if he himself always sang as he

did on the recordings. This same question has received exhaustive treatment in the discussion that in the Western academic world surrounds the concepts of ‘historical performance practice’ and ‘authoritative editions’ of great composers’ compositions. The problem is exemplified by Nicholas Cook in respect to a recording of the last castrato, Alessandro Moreschi:

And behind the hiss and crackle you can hear a rendition of the Ave Maria that sounds extraordinary to modern ears. There are specific features you might pick out; for instance, Moreschi glides rapidly on to some of the notes from an octave or more below, in a way that no modern singer would. But it is the sound of his voice, what you might call the tonal ideal embodied in it, that seems most bizarre: it has an acute, almost painful focus, as if it were a kind of sublimated primal scream. Of course we don’t know whether the recording exemplified Moreschi at his best; he may well have been nervous, for early recording processes were very intrusive. And we don’t know how far the way Moreschi sung the Ave Maria is typical of how it was sung elsewhere. Maybe the recording sounded as strange to Moreschi’s contemporaries as it does to us. But then again, maybe it did not. And that is the point: we don’t know, and what is more there is no way we ever can know. The conclusion is obvious: if we don’t really know what music sounded like at the turn of the twentieth century, how can we possibly know what medieval music sounded like? The honest answer is that we can’t (2000:55).

In summary, the point is that no matter how great an individual artist Ha Kyuil may have been, it is clear that one person can never be representative of an entire musical tradition. Therefore, the disinterest of Korean scholarship in finding alternative ‘schools’ of *chŏngga* after the colonial period is striking. My answer to the first question posed above, then, is “No, not all contemporary *chŏngga* practice goes back to Ha Kyuil”. To explain, there are, in fact, some singers in the later generations of *chŏngga* practice such as Chŏng Kyŏng’ae, Hong Wŏn’gi and Yi Yang-gyo who learned at least parts of the *chŏngga* repertoire in environments that were not related to the Ha Kyuil lineage.

#### **4.3 Chŏngga transmission – listen and repeat?**

The second question arises out of the first: is strict adherence to tradition an ideal in *chŏngga* practice and are students expected to copy their teacher's style? One way of answering this question is to observe the musical reality; then the answer will clearly be 'no'. If we listen to different recordings of *sijo* by, say, Kim Hosŏng and Hong Wŏn'gi, it is obvious that each has their own style, despite the fact that they had the same main teacher and therefore belong to the same lineage. The other half of the question, however, needs to be considered through the perception of the singers themselves. While for *p'ansori* (epic chant) singers it is generally unacceptable to exactly copy the style of their teachers, the matter is much less clear with *chŏngga*.

Again, we are theoretically torn between two ideals. On the one hand, due to the Korean system for the preservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, there is one kind of *chŏngga* performance that is considered to be the correct one, and this is that of Yi Chuhwan, as Yi learned it from Ha Kyuil. From other realms of Korean music, such as mask dance (*talch'um*), it is known that the bureau in charge of the administration of intangible heritage preservation, formerly the *Munhwajae kwalliguk* but now the *Munhwajae ch'ŏng*, shows little flexibility and insists on the proper execution as it has been documented and fixed, sometimes going as far as threatening to withdraw performers' special status as Holders of Intangible Properties (Yang Jongsung 2003:82, see also Howard 2006b). Traditional Neo-Confucian thought in Korea and *chŏngga*'s proximity<sup>4</sup> to genres of court music further strengthen this interpretation. Hence, in a performance of *Chongmyo cheryeak*, the Rite for Royal Ancestors, nothing is up for debate, and individual creativity is certainly not desired, although whether it can be avoided is an altogether different question. And, despite the differences observed in recordings of different singers, ultimately the view of the singers themselves holds more importance. A singer could argue that the differences that we hear are just variations in the parameters of *chŏngga* that are irrelevant to the essential aesthetic. In other words, they might claim there are no *important* differences between their and somebody else's version. The only way to find out if this is really the case was

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<sup>4</sup> A proximity that historically resulted from the foundation of the Korean Court Music Study Institute in which what is known as *chŏnggak* today was grouped together with and taught next to actual ritual court music (*aak*).

to ask the singers themselves. This I did as the next step of my research. In two interviews at the Gugak National High School on 14 November 2014 and 19 August 2015, *kagok* singer and *chōngga* teacher Yi Sūngyun explained to me that singers should have their own style and that she encouraged this in her own students once they had enough basic knowledge. To her, in the same way that a student's face differs from the teacher's, his or her voice does, too, so it would be unnatural to expect performance to be too similar.

In his classes, my *sijo* teacher Moon Hyun, who is employed at the National Gugak Center, emphasized a great many variations, indicative of an awareness of a tradition with regional differences, rather than an over-reliance on a single person, or the elusive concept of the *wōnhyōng*. Generally, it seems that the *wōnhyōng* as a single authentic form is an ideal promoted by the intangible heritage bureau that does not sit well with the reality of music-making (isolated attempts at control as those mentioned by Yang and Howard, particularly in connection with mask dance, notwithstanding). If *chōngga* performers were really trying to adhere to the *wōnhyōng*, the logical thing would be to listen to the recordings of Ha Kyuil and try to imitate his singing as closely as possible. A comparison between Ha's recordings and those of any later performer reveals that nobody does this. If we want to draw a parallel again to Western art music, we find that the *wōnhyōng* closely resembles the elusive idea of 'historical performance practice' in tune with what is supposed to be the composer's intention: the piece performed as the composer intended it.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that the *wōnhyōng* in Korea and the concern for the composer's intention in the West is meaningless. Rather, what matters seems to be how each individual musician positions him or herself in relation to these concepts, no matter if in Korea, or, as in the following quotation, in Western music:

From about 1900 you can actually hear period performance, in many cases by the composer (Elgar conducting his symphonies, Debussy and Bartók playing their piano music, and so on). Modern performers listen to these recordings. But they do not imitate them, in the way that look-alike bands

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<sup>5</sup> The debate, terminology and claims surrounding 'historical performance practice' are discussed in a book chapter, 'The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past,' by Richard Taruskin (1988).

and Elvis impersonators imitate their models, although this would be the obvious thing to do if they really wanted to play the music as the composer intended it. Rather, they claim to extrapolate the stylistic principles embodied in the performances on the records, and then re-create the music on that basis. (This claim has, for instance, been advanced by John Boyden, the artistic director of the New Queen's Hall Orchestra.) But that is a convoluted argument. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that its primary purpose is to safeguard the interpretive freedom, the creativity, which performers and audiences both value, but which our perversely conflicted language for performance does not allow us openly to articulate (Cook 2000:97-8).

In an interview at the National Gugak Center on 15 August 2015, Moon Hyun told me that, notwithstanding a personal style – a singer's individual 'colour' – the idea of changing the repertoire is fundamentally incompatible with *chŏngga*. A singer like his teacher Yi Yang-gyo disapproved of students' departing from his teachings or learning from another, second teacher. Moon Hyun emphasized that the purity of the tradition had to be maintained and that, especially, changes due to technical shortcomings on the part of a singer were unacceptable. Only when a singer had mastered the canon in all its complexity would he be in a position to decide whether he wanted to interpret things differently. Moon confirmed that no singer would try to copy exactly Ha Kyuil's recordings sanctioned as the *wŏnhyŏng*, and explained the discrepancies between contemporary *chŏngga* and the recordings by reference to incremental mistakes<sup>6</sup> that have accumulated along a particular teaching lineage. In an interview I conducted at the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture (*Wŏlha munhwa chaedan*, named after a famed female *chŏngga* teacher, Kim Wŏlha) on 21 August 2015, *kagok* singer Pak Mun-gyu coincided with Moon Hyun in terms of his general perception, agreeing that *chŏngga* teachers generally expect their students to sing the way they have been taught, and that outstanding ability is a prerequisite to the artistic freedom of introducing change. The concept of *wŏnhyŏng*, according to him, could not change the fact the music would always change, nowadays as in the past, although he remarked that there

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<sup>6</sup> The correct interpretation of Moon's words is complicated here by the fact that many Koreans occasionally mistakenly use the word *tŭllida* (to be wrong) in the meaning of *tarŭda* (to differ), so it is possible that Moon meant "incremental changes" rather than "incremental mistakes". Yet, since I do not recall him mixing the two up on other occasions, he likely was speaking of actual mistakes.

was a difference between singing something differently, and singing something wrong. In an interview on 26 August 2015, *kagok* property holder Kim Yŏnggi expressed an opinion similar to that of Yi Sŏngyun: that individual ‘style’ arises naturally from the fact that certain pieces in the repertoire go better with a singer’s personality than others.

It is worth returning for a moment to some of the discussions that have surrounded historical performance practice in the West to see if there are parallels with performance practice and particularly the concept of the *nŏnhyŏng* in Korea. In his essay, Taruskin puts forward the argument that the aesthetic embraced by the historical performance practice movement is “a performance style that is completely of our own time, and is in fact the most modern style around” (1988:152), citing proof that the performance style developed alongside musical modernism, and connecting it specifically to the person and musical aesthetic of Stravinsky.

We can speculate if the hypothesis occasionally put forward by Korean scholars and singers that *chŏngga* – especially *kagok* – are performed more slowly today than in the past (see Park Sung-Hee 2010:203-6) similarly points to a ‘modern’ performance practice. The following comment on the phenomenon by *kasa* singer Kim Hosŏng seems to suggest so:

This is simply a natural phenomenon. In the old days, *kagok* was a living tradition, developed and enjoyed by aficionados, musicians, and audiences. Now that the music has become divorced from its natural habitat, performers play in a more artificial manner, adding more ornaments and making it slower (quotation in Park Sung-Hee 2010:205).

Contemporary performance of *chŏngga*, largely divorced from the evaluation of aficionados, may then have evolved by slowing down, in the process showcasing its style in a manner that contrasts both folk and pop music, and by doing so emphasizing, so to say, the slowness of *chŏngga* as a defining and exceptional feature.

Taruskin, meanwhile, also questions the concept of historical performance practice at a more fundamental level, asking: “Why should this be our aim? What does such an aim say about us?” He contends, citing the music historian Donald Grout, that if

... a composer of ‘old music’ could by some miracle be brought to life in the twentieth century to be quizzed about the methods of performance in his own times, his first reaction would certainly be one of astonishment at our interest in such matters. Have we no living tradition of music, that we must be seeking to revive a dead one? The question might be embarrassing. Musical archaism may be a symptom of a disintegrating civilization (1988:141).

We can surmise that in the Korean case such a hypothetical resurrected scholar-official or *kagae* would likely be not nearly so astonished as the Western composer in Grout’s example, for in Korean history there is ample precedent for a preoccupation with the proper and original way of performance, documentation and restoration, for example by the Bureau of Instruments Construction in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and its attempts to recover *aak* ritual music. So Koreans, as justification for their *wŏnhyŏng* rationale, need point no further than the following *sijo* (SMS 145) by Yi Hwang (1501-1570):

The ancients cannot see me;

I cannot see the ancients.

Though I cannot see the ancients, the road they’ve walked lies before me.

With the road,

they’ve walked before me, how can I avoid walking it?<sup>7</sup>

It follows that even if the Korean quest for authenticity in the shape of the *wŏnhyŏng* is fraught with the same problems as its Western counterpart, at least there is no denying that the quest for authenticity is authentic.

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<sup>7</sup> Translation by O’Rourke (2002:54, No.66).

## Part II – The genealogy of *chŏngga*

The documentation on *chŏngga* singing in Seoul towards the end of Chosŏn dynasty suggests that there were two main strands, divided mainly by class and geographically isolated in consequence. One of these was the main lineage treated here, that of Ha Kyuil, a *chungin kagae*, or singer from the class of middle-status people, representative of *chŏngga* practice in the central area of Chosŏn-era Seoul, as Yi Pohyŏng pointed out to me. The other was a *chŏngga* tradition of *p'yŏngmin kagae*, commoner-status singers, termed *sagyech'uk* after an area outside the city gates where most of the singers in that group lived. If these were the two populations at the beginning of the bottleneck – the Japanese colonial period – then it is evident that the second was gradually eclipsed by the first, through a dynamic owed to the class bias that persisted in Korea until after liberation which let some styles seem more worthy of appreciation, sponsorship and preservation than others.

The exact degree to which this value judgment can be upheld is a matter of debate. Traditional Korean musicology has endorsed such a view, for example, in Sŏng Kyŏngnŏn's account which paints the *sagyech'uk* singers as singers of first and foremost *chapka* – an umbrella term for a range of more folk-like songs – but not *chŏngga*, and their claim to represent the *chŏngga* tradition therefore is made accordingly weak. This is debated, however, by folklore scholar Yi Pohyŏng who in publications, classes (one of which I took over a semester in 2014 at the Academy of Korean Studies), and the aforementioned interview, argues in favour of a *p'yŏngmin chŏngga chiptan* – commoner *chŏngga* singers as a distinct group with a self-conception as *chŏngga* singers. Yi points to a notable past and the starting point of the *sagyech'uk* genealogy, which is no different to that of the Ha Kyuil lineage: singer Chang Ubyŏk (1735-1809). Yi's view is that the *p'yŏngmin chŏngga chiptan* were *chŏngga* singers in the first place, but created new repertoires for themselves to adapt to changing times and audiences. Park Sung-Hee takes a similar line when she argues that *sagyech'uk* singers likely had to adapt to the preferences of their audiences, preferences which would have been heavier on the *chapka* than on the *chŏngga* side (2011:301-4). Kim Minjŏng's research brings the debate to its logical conclusion. Her recent PhD thesis (2015) analyses



recordings from the 1960s and 1970s by two different singers associated with the two lineages, comparing stylistic differences and interpreting them as expressive of the respective class and social stratum of their lineages.

The standard genealogy of *kagok* and the Ha Kyuil lineage comes from the culture and history scholar An Hwak (1886-1949), who published it as part of a volume he wrote as the result of four years of research at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* between 1928-1932. An's account still features in many publications and reports such as the volume *Gagok: Classic Long Lyric Song Cycle* in the 'UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity Series' (2012), but recently discovered pieces of documentation have pointed to some mistakes in this view and rendered new information on the dates of singers mentioned, so the genealogy I am presenting here differs from that found in most extant sources, with the majority of my amendments being based on what I regard as more reliable information in Kim Minjŏng's research. And, the amount of teaching links between the people in the genealogy is such that I produce a chart (Diagram 4.1, p. 131) to visualize the two teaching lineages – it is added at the end of this chapter so that the reader may consult it at the same time as the main text.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.4 Ha Kyuil and Im Kijun – singers from a different era

The story of the current *chŏngga* canon starts with two singers who grew up at the end of Chosŏn dynasty and who were first-hand witnesses to the turmoil and the radical changes that Korea underwent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: Ha Kyuil (1868-1937) and Im Kijun (1867-1940). Although other singers from this era, some of whom will be discussed below, as well as their teachers are known, information about others is comparatively sparse, so that these two are routinely taken as the starting point of the *chŏngga* canon in published accounts. Ha Kyuil also seems to be the first

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<sup>8</sup> The singers figure according to their birthdates, in proportion to a timeline at the left. Note, however, that due to a lack of space, the timeline runs in equidistant five-year intervals only between 1830-1945 (which seemed an acceptable solution, given that dates for earlier singers are disputed). The focus is on the *Chujobak* lineage and their impact on the Ha Kyuil lineage, so not all singers discussed here figure in the chart.

*chŏngga* singer of whose singing there are recordings.<sup>9</sup> Ha and Im's paramount importance to the history of traditional Korean music, especially *chŏngga*, lies in the fact that they single-handedly transmitted the entire repertoire of *chŏngga* to the next generation of students while they were teaching at the *Yimangjik aakpu* during the Japanese colonial era.

Ha Kyuil is considered Korea's most masterful singer of *chŏngga*. He was born in Seoul, as the cousin of Ha Sunil (~1857~1933), another famous *kagok* singer.<sup>10</sup> Ha Kyuil learned his *chŏngga* from Ch'oe Subo (dates unknown), a student of his uncle Ha Chun'gwŏn (dates unknown), and, for some time, from the illustrious Pak Hyogwan (~1800-1885, according to a recent estimate), a *sijo* singer and *sijo* writer famed for compiling the *Kagok wŏllyu*, one of the major *sijo* text anthologies, together with his student An Minyŏng (1816?-1895?).<sup>11</sup> Pak Hyogwan, on the other hand, learned from Kim Chaesŏng (dates unknown), who in turn had been taught by Chang Ubyŏk (1735-1808)<sup>12</sup> – this gives us the farthest known link into the past of the genealogy of *chŏngga*. Ha Kyuil's artistic ancestry can thus be linked all the way back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although the dynamic of musical transmission suggests *chŏngga* performance likely underwent changes during the intervening period. *Kayagŭm* zither master Myŏng Wanbyŏk (1842-1926), a

<sup>9</sup> Park Sung-Hee discusses the possibility that Pak Ch'unjae (1883-1950?) who is discussed below was recorded in America earlier (2011:301), but even if this was the case, it is not likely that he sang *chŏngga* for the occasion.

<sup>10</sup> Ha Sunil merits a brief discussion himself. He was the favourite student of Pak Hyogwan and briefly taught *kagok* at the *Choyang kurakpu*, the predecessor to the short-lived Korean Court Music Study Institute. He was equally noted as a performer, and according to testimony by Kim Hosŏng cited in Kim Minjŏng (2015:43), he taught even in later years when he lived close to the royal residence of Tŏksu Palace, especially to *kisaeng* from the *Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn* like Chi Kŭmjŏng. More withdrawn than his much younger cousin Ha Kyuil, he left less of a mark as a teacher, and his style must be assumed to be in the tradition of the same teachers who taught Ha Kyuil. Furthermore, he does not seem to have taught students who were not also taught by Ha Kyuil, so as a result he is not considered to have been influential in the genealogy of *chŏngga*.

<sup>11</sup> There is a major discrepancy here with the traditional view which saw Ch'oe Subo as Ha Chun'gwŏn's teacher rather than the other way around, but this has been proven wrong (Kim Minjŏng 2015:52). The name of the latter is alternatively given as Ha Chunggon or Ha Chun'gon, but the Chun'gwŏn variant seems to match the current academic consensus. He was previously seen as Ha Kyuil's main teacher, but he purportedly considered Ha Kyuil ungifted and advised him to give up singing (Kim Minjŏng 2015:45). Moon Hyun offers a slightly different genealogy, based on oral testimony by Sŏng Kyŏngnin and Yi Yang-gyo. This omits Kim Chaesŏng altogether, sees Chŏng Chungbo as a student of Pak Hyogwan, and Ch'oe Subo as the teacher of Myŏng Wanbyŏk – in fact, none of these assertions is in fundamental contradiction to the genealogy established here (2015:36).

<sup>12</sup> Previously, O Tongnae (dates unknown) was erroneously held as the link between Chang Ubyŏk and Ch'oe Subo (who was believed to be Ha Chun'gwŏn's teacher). But, O Tongnae was another known student of Chang Ubyŏk next to Kim Chaesŏng. O Tongnae had one student – Chŏng Chungbo (dates unknown) – of whom no students are known.

music director of the *Yiwangjik aakpu*, had also trained as a singer with Ha Chun'gwŏn, but he likely taught *chŏngga* neither at the *Aakpu* nor elsewhere.

From around the turn of the century until the Japanese annexation, Ha Kyuil was first a judge at Hansŏng<sup>13</sup> Court in Seoul and then held political office as the governor of Chinan County in North Chŏlla Province. After Korea lost its sovereignty, Ha Kyuil gave up his official duties and focused on music. He was involved in the foundation of the Korean Court Music Study Institute (*Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpsŏ*) at the beginning of the colonial period. In later years, he also taught at the *Taejŏng kwŏnbŏn* and the *Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn*, which were training institutions for *kisaeng*.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, he became the main *chŏngga* teacher at the *Yiwangjik aakpu*, at which he was employed from 1926 to 1937. During this time, he taught and transmitted to a generation of students the entire *kagok* repertoire, eight of the twelve *kasa*,<sup>15</sup> as well as the *sijo* repertoire of *p'yŏng chungbŏri* and *chirŭm sijo*. Ha Kyuil also held a notable role in the teaching of *chŏngga* to *kisaeng* in the *kwŏnbŏn*, so he may be seen as the most important *chŏngga* teacher of his time, next to possibly Ch'oe Kyŏngsik (1876-1949; discussed below), who rivalled him in prolificness, but not influence.

Among Ha Kyuil's students were Yi Pyŏngsŏng, Yi Chuhwan, Chang Sa-Hun, Sŏng Kyŏngnin, Kim Kisu, Yi Sŏkjae, Kim Chonghŭi, Pak Noa and Pak Ch'angjin, as well as a number of *kisaeng*: Kim Sujŏng, Chi Kŭmjŏng, Yi Nanhyang, Kim Chinyang, An Pich'wi, Chu Sanwŏl and Sŏ Sanhoju among others.<sup>16</sup> Some of his students became important singers or scholars of the next generation.

Recordings of pieces from the *kagok* repertoire sung by Ha Kyuil in the 1920s are available.<sup>17</sup> Although the poor quality of the recording complicates doing so, a cursory comparison<sup>18</sup> with

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<sup>13</sup> An old name for Seoul.

<sup>14</sup> The *kwŏnbŏn*, training institutes for *kisaeng*, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.2.

<sup>15</sup> The *kasa* he omitted on the grounds of their perceived vulgarity are *Yangyangga*, *Suyangsan'ga*, *Maehwaga* and *Ch'ŏsaga*, at least some of which have been surmised to be later additions to the *kasa* repertoire (see Park Sung-Hee 2011:164-6). Rather than in respect to lyrics, their vulgar character is apparently in their singing techniques reminiscent of the folk realm, which puts them in the proximity of the *chapka* repertoire. However, I have not found a source expressly stating what was considered vulgar about these, and the vulgarity is something that does not seem well-understood by contemporary singers or scholars (see, e.g., Chang Sa-Hun 1980:7), although some singers follow Ha Kyuil's example and do not sing them (for example Yi Sŏngyun).

<sup>16</sup> A couple more are listed in Kim Minjŏng (2015:41).

<sup>17</sup> Chang Sa-Hun gives 1928 as the year of the recordings for Victor Records.

newer recordings reveals a few striking differences, some of which may be owed to the recording circumstances. For one thing, the opening sections (*tasŭrŭm*) seem to be kept much shorter, possible due to constraints of the technical circumstances which made longer recordings impossible (an SP has a maximum length of just over four minutes each side). Also notable is the higher tempo of Ha Kyuil's recordings – it has been discussed whether this may also be due to limited recording time, although some singers argue that this represents a general trend in which especially slower pieces in the *kagok* repertoire have tended to become slower in modern times.<sup>19</sup>

Less is known and written about Im Kijun; his entry in the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*<sup>20</sup> introduces him as a “master singer of *kasa* and *sijo*”. There is much less information on his life, and as a *p'yŏngmin* singer he was eclipsed by Ha Kyuil. His role in the transmission of *chŏngga* was limited to the few pieces in the repertoire that Ha Kyuil refused to sing – four out of the twelve *kasa* – as well as *sasŏl chirŭm sijo*, the latter, too, being deemed too vulgar and folk-like for a *chungin* singer. Im Kijun was, then, ultimately the lesser figure among the two, and as a *p'yŏngmin* singer his appointment to the *Aakpu* seems remarkable.<sup>21</sup> His repertoire and style were undoubtedly seen as inferior to Ha Kyuil's, at the time and also later by the first generation of Korean musicologists and beyond. In interview, Moon Hyun referred to him somewhat disparagingly as *ttantara*, a term that means something like ‘ham actor’, an entertainer with little claim to artistic integrity.<sup>22</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, a recent publication by Moon also raises the claim, based on Yi Yang-gyo's comments, that Im Kijun entered the *Aakpu* only in 1939 to replace the deceased Ha Kyuil, and that he taught *sijo* and the four *kasa* Ha Kyuil did not teach for only four months

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<sup>18</sup> I compared the pieces *Ŏllak* and *Pyŏllak* to recordings from the 1970s by the later property holder Hong Wŏn'gi, a singer in Ha Kyuil's tradition who was a student of Yi Chuhwan and Yi Pyŏngsŏng, and therefore separated by two generations.

<sup>19</sup> See Park Sung-Hee 2011:203-6.

<sup>20</sup> Written by Chang Sa-Hun.

<sup>21</sup> The real question is why Im Kijun's four *kasa* (and by extension his part of the *sijo* repertoire) were deemed worthy of preservation at the *Aakpu* and who was responsible for including them in the *chŏngga* repertoire at the time. Commentators disagree on whether the canon of the twelve *kasa* already existed at the time which is something that even musicians at the time must have disagreed upon. In short, it is likely that Ha Kyuil considered the four *kasa* he did not sing as not being part of the *chŏngga* canon, while whoever took the decision to hire Im Kijun so that they could be taught alongside the rest of the *chŏngga* canon clearly must have considered that they did form part of it.

<sup>22</sup> *P'yŏngmin* singers were free to mould a more personal style, which is one of the reasons that Ha Kyuil, as Yi Pohyŏng pointed out to me, would have concurred with Moon. Apparently, little love was lost between singers of these classes who held what may be regarded as competing musical visions.

there (2015:35). Im Kijun himself died shortly afterwards, in 1940.<sup>23</sup> So although Im Kijun came to take his place alongside Ha Kyuil in the Ha Kyuil lineage, he is part of it neither in terms of his actual lineage, nor, it seems, in the perception of the musicians at the time and in the following decades. Nothing is known about his teachers, although he is reported to have associated with and performed alongside other *p'yŏngmin* singers, namely Ch'oe Sanguk and Chang Kyeche'un.

This brings us to the second strand of *chŏngga* practice and transmission. There was a number of *chŏngga* singers in Seoul who belonged more or less to Ha Kyuil's generation, but not, apparently, his lineage, as well as five known singers from the previous generation who taught several of them. I will digress to briefly discuss these. Their birth and death dates, especially for early singers, are often difficult to reconstruct and some of the singers are shrouded in an almost total lack of documentation. However, many *p'yŏngmin* singers defy the common-sense grouping of the three *chŏngga* genres together in that they sang, or at least known were known for, only *kasa* and *sijo*; Yi Pohyŏng told me that Im Kijun, for example, was a good *kagok* singer, but that other *p'yŏngmin* singers did not know the more difficult *kagok*.

The first two of the singers before Ha Kyuil's generation are the brothers Hong Chinwŏn and Hong Pirwŏn (dates unknown, both estimated to have been active ~1850-1900),<sup>24</sup> singers who belonged to the *chungin* class of middle-status people, much like Ha Kyuil. The Hong brothers sang all three *chŏngga* genres, and at least Hong Chinwŏn seems to have been a student of Pak

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<sup>23</sup> This claim makes it seem that the inclusion of Im Kijun's *kasa* was not based on considerations of the canon, but occurred just because these happened to be what "the new *chŏngga* teacher" had to offer. Most sources seem to imply that Ha Kyuil and Im Kijun taught at the *Aakpu* during the same time, although I cannot find statements that expressly contradict Moon Hyun's claim. It still seems a little doubtful when we compare the entrance dates (cited in brackets) to the *Yiwangjik aakpu* of some of the singers who undoubtedly learned Im Kijun's *kasa*: Yi Pyŏngsŏng (1922), Yi Chuhwan (1926), Chang Sa-Hun and Kim Kisu (both 1931) all learned the *kasa*, and they had all long finished their five-year training course by 1939. Even if they stayed at the *Aakpu* as *aaksubo* or *aakso* (see Chapter 5.3 for explanations) and audited Im Kijun's classes, four songs seem a lot to teach to not only a number of regular students, but also to at least four auditing students in only four months, not to speak of a repertoire of at least 27 pieces of *chirŭm sijo* and *sasŏl chirŭm sijo*, which Moon Hyun states Chang Sa-Hun learned from Im Kijun and later transmitted to Yi Yang-gyo (2015:37). Note, too, that the musicologist Song Hyejin writes that *Suyangsŏn'ga*, one of Im Kijun's *kasa*, was performed at least three times in the *yisŭphoe* (see Chapter 5.3) between 1932 and 1944 (2001:356); unfortunately, no dates are given for these performances in Song's publication, but if the records were to yield that any of these performances predated 1939 it would prove that Im Kijun started teaching at the *Aakpu* before Ha Kyuil's death.

<sup>24</sup> According to Sŏng Kyŏngnin, one was called Hong Pilgwang rather than Hong Chinwŏn, unless, unlikely enough, he is talking about a third brother (*Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Pak Ch'unjae').

Hyogwan (or Ha Chun'gwŏn, according to Moon Hyun's genealogy (2015:36)); accordingly, he and his lineage hold the same claim to the tradition of Chang Ubyŏk as the Ha clan.

The other three singers of the era were a famous trio of *sagyech'uk* singers belonging to the lower *p'yŏngmin* class, often shortened as 'Ch'ujobak', in which the three syllables stand for Ch'u Kyosin (dates unknown), Cho Kijun (~1835-1900) and Pak Ch'un'gyŏng (~1850-1920) respectively. Active in the same period, the late 1800s, living in the same area and associated as performers, they were important *chapka* singers and teachers, to the degree that each is the starting point of a separate *chapka* lineage; whether their fame rested on their performance of *chŏngga* or of the more folk-like *chapka* is a debate that cannot be resolved here. The oldest of the three was Cho Kijun, an artisan of *kat*, Korean traditional horsehair hats, versed in all three genres, but famous especially for *kasa* as well as *chirŭm* and *sasŏl chirŭm* sijo. Pak Ch'un'gyŏng, a farmer, was famous for mostly *chapka*; he learned sijo from Cho Kijun, and sang *kasa* as well, but no evidence indicates that he knew *kagok*. Ch'u Kyosin, a blacksmith according to spoken testimony by Hwang Yongju cited by Park Sung-Hee (2011:300), was the youngest of the three but considered the best of them, knowledgeable in all three genres but famous for his *kagok* which he had learned from Hong Chinwŏn. Ch'u is reported to have taught sijo and *chapka* at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn*, so he must have lived at least until the 1920s (Moon Hyun 2015:63). These five singers, then, are the known starting points of non-Ha-Kyuil-related *chŏngga* practice in late Chosŏn.

There is evidence of over a dozen *chŏngga* singers more or less of Ha Kyuil's generation who were active and involved in teaching activities in Seoul at the same time he was. Most of them warrant little discussion as too little is known about them. Yi Yŏnghwan, Sin Kyŏngsŏn and Chang Tŏkkŭn (dates unknown for all three) were *chŏngga* singers active at the Korean Court Music Study Institute next to Ha Kyuil during its short existence. Chang Tŏkkŭn later taught *kasa*

at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn* next to Cho Yŏngho (dates unknown) who in addition taught sijo;<sup>25</sup> Hwang Chongsun (1870-?) was a *kagok* teacher at the Chongno *kwŏnbŏn*, while Chu Subong (~1870-?), who learned sijo from Pak Ch'un'gyŏng, taught sijo at the *Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn*<sup>26</sup> to the *kisaeng* courtesans Yi Chinhong, P'yo Yŏngwŏl, Kim Oksim (1925-1988) and Muk Kyewŏl (1921-2014) (none of whom are known for *chŏngga*). More influential and central in this alternative genealogy are three singers who have in common that they held a post as *kamu pyŏlgam* in the royal palace at the end of the dynasty. A *kamu pyŏlgam* was a musician or dancer who, unlike regular court musicians, was responsible for providing musical entertainment to the king himself, rather than at rituals or official banquets:

Unlike the *akkong* (court musicians) at the *Changagwŏn*, the *kamu pyŏlgam* were directly around the king, their duty being to console him through song and dance as subordinates of the *aekchŏngsŏ* (Office for Palace Administration).<sup>27</sup>

The first of these is Chang Kyech'un (1860-1946), whose *kamu pyŏlgam* status is the least well-attested, but given that he<sup>28</sup> later taught court dance at the *kwŏnbŏn*, he may have been a dancer at the court. Chang was a *chapka* and *chŏngga* singer who performed alongside Ch'oe Sanguk and Im Kijun, and taught all three genres at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn*. He had learned *kagok* from Cho Kijun and all three *chŏngga* genres from Ch'u Kyosin. Next, Pak Ch'unjae (1883-1950?), famous as a *chapka* and *kasa* singer though versed in all three *chŏngga* genres, performed *chapka* at the court and later taught at the *Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn* and other *kwŏnbŏn*, though apparently he did not teach *chŏngga*. He had learned *kasa* from Cho Kijun, sijo from Pak Ch'un'gyŏng and *kagok* from the Hong brothers. Next, Ch'oe Sanguk (1878-1951) was famous for his repertoire of six out of the twelve

<sup>25</sup> Another *kagok* singer named Ch'u Kyesun (dates unknown) is mentioned only in the booklet of a CD with *kagok* and *kasa* recordings by Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi (1908-1976) as one of Ch'oe's *kagok* teachers, but it is unclear whether Ch'u was also a teacher at the *kwŏnbŏn*.

<sup>26</sup> According to Moon Hyun, Chu Subong taught sijo at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn* as well (2015:38).

<sup>27</sup> Sŏng Kyŏngnin, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Ch'oe Sanguk'.

<sup>28</sup> In the entry on Chang Kyech'un in the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, Hahn Man-young mistakenly classifies Chang as a female singer; not only could a woman never have held the posts that Chang held, but in a newspaper article cited by Kim Minjŏng, Chang is referred to as 'Chang Kyech'un ong', which is a term employed exclusively for old men (2015:21).

*kasa*, as well as *ujo* and *ujo chirŭm* *sijo*, and acted as a *kasa* and *sijo* singer at the royal court. His teacher is reported to have been Hong Chinwŏn (Moon Hyun 2015:63),<sup>29</sup> which would make him and Pak Ch'unjae the last known singers to have learned from the Hong brothers.

Finally, there are two more important *chŏngga* singers in Ha Kyuil's generation: Ch'oe Kyŏngsik (1876-1949) and Ch'oe Chŏngsik (1886-1951). Ch'oe Kyŏngsik, though noted mostly as a singer of *chapka*, folk songs and *sijo*, knew all three *chŏngga* genres as the main disciple of Cho Kijun, from whom he learned *kasa* and *sijo*. He also learned *kasa* from Chang Kyech'un and various folk genres from Pak Ch'un'gyŏng. He was an influential and prolific teacher with a number of notable students whom he taught mainly *kasa* and folk genres. After liberation he was briefly active as a folk singer at the private institute for court and literati music, the *Taeŋan kugagwŏn*. Ch'oe Chŏngsik learned *kasa* and *sijo* from the slightly older Ch'oe Kyŏngsik and studied under Ch'oe Sanguk as well. He was later active at the *Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn* as the *chapka* teacher of a number of notable students, including An Pich'wi and Muk Kyewŏl.

#### 4.5 Yi Chuhwan and the second generation of *chŏngga* singers

A crucial figure among Ha Kyuil's students at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* was Yi Chuhwan (1909-1972), who may be regarded as one of the eminent figures of the Korean music world of the 1950s and 1960s, in particular with regard to *chŏngga*. As the main teacher of almost the entire next generation of *chŏngga* singers, no one at the time played a greater role in the transmission of the *chŏngga* repertoire than he. Yi Chuhwan authored publications on *chŏngga*,<sup>30</sup> as well as notations of the repertoire; he is credited with modifications to the traditional notation system *chŏngganbo* and

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<sup>29</sup> In our interview, Yi Pohyŏng stated that Ch'oe Sanguk was a *chungin kagaek* and the teacher of Im Kijun, both of which were likely lapses in his memory. Yi Pohyŏng contradicted himself later in the same interview, saying that Ch'oe Sanguk was a *p'yŏngmin kagaek*, which actually seems accurate. The assertion that he was Im Kijun's teacher is improbable, though, since Im Kijun was approximately 11 years older than Ch'oe; they certainly knew each other, however, given that they performed together. So, theoretically Im Kijun could have been Ch'oe Sanguk's teacher rather than the other way round. Im Kijun's proximity to Chang Kyech'un and Ch'oe Sanguk invites speculation that he might have been another *kamu pyŏlgam*, but I am unable to find evidence to this effect.

<sup>30</sup> For example *Sijoch 'ang ŭi yŏn'gu*, 1961, Yesurwŏnbo.



he produced the first *chŏngga* notations. However, his main significance can be seen in his teaching, to the point that the majority of *chŏngga* singers nowadays belong to his lineage.

Yi Chuhwan was born in Seoul, entered the *Yiwangjik aakpu* as a *p'iri* student in 1926 and graduated in 1931 at the age of 22, during which time he learned both the male and female *kagok*, as well as the entire *kasa* repertoire from Ha Kyuil, save the four *kasa* which Ha did not sing and which Yi learned from Im Kijun. After graduating, Yi Chuhwan held different offices in the *Yiwangjik aakpu* and taught at the *Chongno kwŏnbŏn* and later the *Sambwa kwŏnbŏn*; following Korea's liberation from Japanese rule, the National Gugak Center (*Kungnip kugagwŏn*) was established in 1951, and he served as its first director until 1962. However, his teaching was not limited to the Center, but extended to the Gugak National High School. Although Yi Chuhwan had originally trained as a *p'iri* player, he became renowned in *kugak* circles as a *chŏngga* singer. After the system for the preservation of Intangible Cultural Properties had been established by the Korean government, Yi Chuhwan was appointed the first holder of *kagok* as Property No. 30 in 1969, and, a year later of *kasa* as Property No. 41, two years prior to his death. Yi Chuhwan was, according to Sŏng Kyŏngnin, "not gifted", but instead became a great singer by means of arduous and devoted practice.<sup>31</sup>

Only one more of Ha Kyuil's students became not only a notable singer<sup>32</sup> but also a teacher of *chŏngga*: Yi Pyŏngsŏng (1909-1960), whose career proceeded in a quite similar way to that of Yi Chuhwan. Yi Pyŏngsŏng was born in Seoul, entered the *Yiwangjik aakpu* as a *p'iri* student in 1922, and learned *kagok* from Ha Kyuil. Likewise, he passed through the ranks of offices at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* and after Korea's liberation became a teacher at the National Gugak Center.

Three of Ha Kyuil's students became some of the most notable figures in the field of Korean music: Chang Sa-Hun (1916-1991), Kim Kisu (1917-1986) and Sŏng Kyŏngnin (1911-2008).

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<sup>31</sup> *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Ha Kyuil'. Both the following footnote and a comment from Pak Mun-gyu (personal communication 2015) who emphasized Hong Wŏn'gi as a true artist among the singers of the era confirm the picture of Yi Chuhwan as a highly influential *kugak* person and *chŏngga* educator, who is, however, not held as being among the best singers of his time.

<sup>32</sup> Chang Sa-Hun reportedly judged Yi Pyŏngsŏng to be the best *kagok* singer in modern Korea (Sheen Dae-Cheol, personal conversation at the Academy of Korean Studies, 26 November 2014).

Chang Sa-Hun, next to Lee Hye-ku (1908-2010) arguably the most influential in the first generation of Korean music scholars, originally hailed from Yŏngju in North Kyŏngsang Province. He studied at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* from 1936 to 1944 as a *kŏmun'go* student, and learned all three genres of *chŏngga* from Ha Kyuil and Im Kijun. Chang Sa-Hun can be credited as a prolific scholar: a professor of Seoul National University's newly established Korean music department after its founding in 1959, he founded various academic journals, and founded or chaired a number of academic societies related to Korean music. He published some of the most influential treatises on a broad range of topics within Korean music, notably analyses of the twelve *kasa* and of *sijo*. *Kŏmun'go* zither player Sŏng Kyŏngnin (1911-2008) is another of the heavyweights of Korean musicology with a number of notable publications, posts as director of both the National Gugak Center and the Gugak National High School, and an appointment as a Property Holder for *Chongmyo cheryeak*, the Rite to Royal Ancestors, as Property No. 1. However, most of his output was not directly related to *chŏngga*. Kim Kisu, on the other hand was known as a musician, composer and educator, who held leading posts as the director of the National Gugak Center and headmaster of the Gugak National High School. He also held appointments for *Chongmyo cheryeak* as Property No. 1 and the court mask dance, *Ch'ŏyongmu*, as Property No. 39, and published scores of *chŏngga* in both Western staff and Korean notations. However, he did not play an important role as a *chŏngga* teacher.

One further student, Yi Sŏkjae (1912-1990), went on to hold appointments for *p'iri* and, next to, among others, Kim Chonghŭi, *Chongmyo cheryeak* as Intangible Cultural Properties. A number of Ha Kyuil's students at the *kisaeng* training institutions are known: Kim Sujŏng (1913-1969),<sup>33</sup> Yi Nanhyang (1901-1985), Chi Kŭmjŏng (1915-1975?),<sup>34</sup> Kim Chinhyang (1916-1999),<sup>35</sup> An Pich'wi

<sup>33</sup> Kim Sujŏng was a *kisaeng* popular for her *kagok* at the time. Song Bang-Song claims that her teacher at the *Chongno kwŏnbŏn* was mostly Yi Chuhwan (2007:567).

<sup>34</sup> According to Moon Hyun, Chi Kŭmjŏng trained at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn* as well, learning *sijo* from Ch'u Kyosin, Chu Subong and Chang Kyech'un (2015:37).

<sup>35</sup> Kim Chinhyang's birth name was Kim Yŏnghwan: Ha Kyuil gave her the name 'Chinhyang', though she is best known as Kim Chaya. The latter name was given to her by a one-time lover, the famous North Korean poet Paek Sŏk (1912-1996). After liberation, she studied English literature at Chung-Ang University and opened a restaurant which became highly popular. As an old woman she donated her fortune and the restaurant to the Buddhist monk Pŏpchŏng with instructions to turn it into a Buddhist temple; she also wrote a memoir about Ha

(1926-1997), Chu Sanwŏl and Sŏ Sanhoju. Among these, Kim Sujŏng and Chi Kŭmjŏng were the most acclaimed; the former can be heard performing alongside Ha Kyuil in some well-known recordings of pieces from the mixed *kagok* repertoire. Yi Nanhyang was one of the teachers of Cho Sunja (b.1944), one of the current holders of *kagok* as an Intangible Cultural Property. An Pich'wi, taught by Ha Kyuil only for a short period as she was only 13 when he passed away, later became holder of *Kyŏnggi minyo* (*Kyŏnggi* folksong) as an Intangible Cultural Property No. 57. No information is readily available on two further *Yiwangjik aakpu* students of Ha Kyuil, Pak Noa and Pak Ch'angjin.

In the generation of Ha Kyuil's students, a certain impoverishment in the diversity of *chŏngga* practice can be observed: Although many dozens of *kisaeng* must have learned *chŏngga* at least to some degree from various teachers, including several belonging to Ha Kyuil's lineage, most of these *kisaeng* were influential in post-liberation Korea at best as singers of folk genres, while the majority of singers from the second strand of *chŏngga* performance in the *Ch'ujobak* lineage were increasingly relegated to teaching folk genres. Three singers outside the Ha Kyuil lineage from the era, however, deserve mention. The first of these three, Kim T'aeyŏng (1891-?), learned all three genres of *chŏngga* from Ch'oe Sanguk and may have been a music director at the *P'yŏngyang kwŏnbŏn*.<sup>36</sup> He taught mostly *sijo* to Kim Yudang, Yi Yang-gyo, Kim Hosŏng and Kim Wŏlha, to the latter while in Busan during the Korean War. The second, Yu Kaedong (1898-1975), learned *kasa* from Chang Kyech'un, *kasa* and *sijo* from Ch'oe Kyŏngsik and *chapka* from Pak Ch'ungyŏng. Next to other Ch'oe Kyŏngsik students, he was appointed as an Intangible Cultural Property holder for *Sŏnsori sant'aryŏng* (No.19), one of the song genres subsumed under *chapka*, in 1968. The third, Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi (1908-1976), was trained as a *kisaeng* at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn* and became noted for her radio performances of *kasa* – especially the piece *Ch'unmyŏn'gok* – and *kagok*. She learned both from Chang Kyech'un, as well as *kagok* from Chang Tŏkkŭn (whose lineage is

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Kyuil (1993). A short video on Youtube shows her as an old woman, singing an excerpt from her favourite *kasa*, *Sangsa pyŏlgok* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAKICNJswRE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAKICNJswRE); accessed July 2017).

<sup>36</sup> This claim is disputed by Yi Yang-gyo who suggests a mix-up, pointing out that Kim T'aeyŏng never went to P'yŏngyang (Moon Hyun 2015:37).

unknown); she may therefore be claimed to have been the last singer whose *kagok* descended from the *Ch'ujobak* lineage.

#### 4.6 Yi Chuhwan's students – human treasures, singers and teachers<sup>37</sup>

An extraordinary figure in the modern world of Korean traditional music is Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae (1916-2003), an expert of traditional Korean performance arts and classical Korean humanities in general, with broad knowledge of not only *chŏngga* – especially regional *sijo* styles – but also other instrumental repertoires and dance. He is the most exceptional case in this genealogy because he falls between the generations I delineated, and he learned almost all of his *chŏngga* outside the Ha Kyuil lineage. Importantly, too, he apparently never studied under Yi Chuhwan, but parts of his *kagok* repertoire were learned from Yi Pyŏngsŏng and this is why I have decided to group him with the generation of Yi Chuhwan and Yi Pyŏngsŏng's students, although his birth year is the same as Chang Sa-Hun's and one year before Kim Kisu, which should place him squarely in the previous generation.

Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae was born in Puan in North Chŏlla Province and spent his childhood with studies of *hanmun* and the Chinese Classics. Only at age 16 did he start his *chŏngga* training, learning *wanje* (Chŏlla Province) and *yŏngje* (Kyŏngsang Province) *sijo* from two local teachers, O Sŏnghyŏn (from Puan) and Kim Ch'un'gyŏng (from Kohŭng, South Chŏlla Province) respectively.<sup>38</sup> Three years later he continued by learning *kasa* from Seoullite Im Chaehŭi (specifically the four songs *Kwŏnjuga*, *Ŏbusa*, *Ch'ŏsaga* and *Yangyangga*), but there are no indications that the latter belonged to Ha Kyuil's lineage. Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae proceeded to learn the female *kagok* repertoire from *taegŭm* transverse flute master Chŏn Kyemun from the nearby city of

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<sup>37</sup> In this generation, I have limited myself to four important singers who stand out for specific reasons. A further *kagok* property holder was Chŏn Hyojun (1913-2001; appointed in 1975) for male *kagok*; the current *kagok* holders are Kim Kyŏngbae (b.1940, appointed in 1998) for male *kagok*, and Cho Sunja (b.1944) and Kim Yŏnggi (b.1958; both appointed in 2001) for female *kagok*.

<sup>38</sup> Moon Hyun additionally cites Im Kiha from Puan, and O Yunmyŏng and Yi Tosam from Koch'ang (North Chŏlla Province), pointing out that the latter are not well-known singers. The latter two are also referred to in Lim Mi-sun's account (2012:4) which additionally includes a teacher of *sasŏl chirŭm sijo* called An Kyehyang. According to her account, Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae learned *kagok* as early as his times of study with Kim Ch'un'gyŏng (who is here cited as hailing from Hŭngdŏk, a district of Ch'ŏngju in North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province), and further learned individual *kasa* (*Sangsa pyŏlgok* and *Ch'ŏsaga*), next to *yŏngje sijo*, already from O Yunmyŏng.

Chongŭp in North Chŏlla, but also grew accustomed to the *chŏngga* of Ha Kyuil, and a number of *kisaeng* and less known performers through recordings. Significantly, this makes him the only singer appointed as a property holder of *chŏngga* who beyond any doubt learned at least part of the *kagok* and *kasa* repertoire from teachers outside Seoul.<sup>39</sup> Finally, during two occasions, at the ages of 24 and 27, Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae also learned the entire *kagok* and *kasa* as well as *kyŏngje* (Kyŏnggi-Province-style) *sijo*<sup>40</sup> repertoire from Yi Pyŏngsŏng, which constitutes his only contact with the Ha Kyuil lineage. Lim Mi-sun comments that Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae could sing five cycles each of male *kagok* (26 songs) and female *kagok* (15 songs).

From the sheer number of teachers that Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae learned from, it is difficult to assess the exact provenance of his style. Yi Pohyŏng who was a disciple of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae, explained it to me as follows:

Because I met master Chŏng often, I had heard about it [his *chŏngga* learning in Chŏlla Province]; when I think about it now, I should have inquired more about that. So now there is no way to know which part of his *kagok*, *kasa* or *sijo* was from Yi Pyŏngsŏng, and which part was from Chŏn Kyemun or Im Chaehŭi (personal communication, August 2015).

Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae was based in Chŏlla Province for most of his life, where he was involved in the foundation of a Korean traditional music institute in Chŏnju, taught students, published recordings and score collections, and systematized the different regional *sijo* schools, as one of the foremost *sijo* experts in post-liberation Korea. Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae is credited with the invention of graphic notation used in *sijo* learning, and was appointed holder of *kasa* as an Intangible Cultural Property in 1975. As an expert of regional *sijo*, Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae coined his

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<sup>39</sup> This was first pointed out to me by folklore scholar Yi Pohyŏng in a lecture at his house near Kongnŭng Station in Seoul. Yi suspected Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae may have been the last singer who carried traces of “regional *kagok/kasa*”, and expressed his regret at never inquiring more about this from Chŏng while he was still alive (9 December 2014).

<sup>40</sup> *Sijo* practice in Seoul, including that in the Ha Kyuil tradition, is generally *kyŏngje sijo*, with additional distinctions drawn between scholar (*sŏnbip'an*) and *kisaeng* style (*kip'an*) *sijo*, discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.3.

own style, *sŏgamje* (after his penname Sŏgam), which is closest to the *yŏngje* style *sijo* and therefore is sometimes called *panyŏngje* (half-*yŏngje*); it is discussed in Chapter 6.3.

Kim Töksun, better known as Kim Wŏlha (1918-1996), is another singer whose life dates would fit the previous section, yet in her case the descent from Ha Kyuil's lineage is evident and established. Kim Wŏlha was born into a poor family in Koyang, a small city north of Seoul, but she attended school in Seoul. At the outbreak of the Korean War she was separated from her husband, fled to Busan and fell ill; it was then that she first came across *sijo*. She first learned from Kim Taeyŏng (1891-?), but soon started her *sijo* study with Yi Pyŏngsŏng, and learned *kagok* from Yi Chuhwan starting in 1958. She also learned *ujo* and *ujo chirŭm sijo* from the younger Hong Wŏn'gi, as well as diverse *sijo* types from various other teachers not related to the Ha Kyuil lineage such as Pak Hŭisu, *kŏmun'go* zither player Im Sŏgyun (1908-1976) from Hwasun in South Chŏlla Province, Chŏng Unsan and In Yŏnghwan. Kim Wŏlha enjoyed a celebrated career as a master singer of *kagok* that culminated in her appointment as the holder of the female *kagok* repertoire as an Intangible Cultural Property in 1973. She thus stands out for being the first notable female *chŏngga* singer in Korea without the stigma of being a *kisaeng*.

Hong Wŏn'gi (1922-1997) was one of the last great *chŏngga* singers to enter the *Yiwangjik aakpu* where he majored in *kayagŭm* zither and *chŏngga* singing, the latter of which had not been available as a separate major to earlier students (although all *Yiwangjik aakpu* students learned *chŏngga* to some degree). As a student of Yi Chuhwan and Yi Pyŏngsŏng, he learned the entire *chŏngga* repertoire, but feeling that this was not enough, he additionally took classes from Ch'oe Sanguk, the aforementioned *kamu pyŏlgam* outside Ha Kyuil's lineage who was renowned especially for his unique style of *kasa* – a repertoire of only six pieces – as well as his *ujo* and *ujo chirŭm sijo*. We can get an idea of the effect that the exposure to an alternative *chŏngga* style had on Hong Wŏn'gi from the following account of that period by Hong's student Kim Kyŏngbae, the current holder for the male *kagok* repertoire:

The relationship between Hong Wŏn'gi and his teacher Ch'oe Sanguk seems to have been particular. He saw Hong Wŏn'gi as his best student, and transmitted to him his *sijo* style, of which *ujo sijo*, *ujo chirŭm sijo* etc. are the most representative examples. My teacher Hong Wŏn'gi used to repeat again and again that he owed to his teacher Ch'oe Sanguk the 'fattening' of his music. Indeed, master Hong Wŏn'gi's song skills exhibited a peculiar musicality that absolutely no one could replicate (2000:10).

This passage gives us a glimpse of the way in which Hong Wŏn-gi benefitted from this additional knowledge; while it may have been unacceptable to sing in Ch'oe Sanguk's style in concerts in his official capacity as a *kagok* property holder,<sup>41</sup> Hong Wŏn-gi's talk of 'fattened music' somehow points to an improvement in his singing skills, possibly through the confidence of knowing a wider range of expressive means.

Hong Wŏn'gi went on to hold posts in the *Yiwangjik aakpu* and, after liberation, at the National Gugak Center beginning in the time it was located in Busan due to the Korean War. For some reason he left that institution within less than a year and proceeded to work as a Korean literature teacher for the rest of the 1950s. A singer as well as literature scholar, Hong Wŏn'gi resumed his musical career in 1962 and was appointed holder of *kagok* as an Intangible Cultural Property in 1975. He also returned to the National Gugak Center.

Yi Yang-gyo (b.1928) was born in Sŏsan, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province as the son of a *hanmun* Classical Chinese teacher. Since *sijo* singing was a typical feature of the *sŏdang* schools that taught *hanmun* at the time, he became acquainted with *sijo* at an early age. When his talent was noticed, he started taking classes from a local *sijo* master as a teenager and laid a solid foundation in the *naep'oje* *sijo* style of Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. Moon Hyun lists Yi Yang-gyo's *sijo* teachers as follows: Yu Pyŏngik (Western *naep'oje* *sijo*), Yi Mun'gyo (both from Sŏsan); in Seoul, *sasŏl* *sijo*

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<sup>41</sup> Pak Mun-gyu told me that as regards the *kasa* that Hong Wŏn-gi learned from Ch'oe Sanguk, Ch'oe's influence clearly came through in performances, and that the performance of a piece like *Paekkusa* exhibited fundamental differences in a performance of Yi Chuhwan versus one of Hong Wŏn-gi. When I asked with surprise whether this did not constitute an unacceptable infringement of the *wŏnhyŏng*'s primacy on the part of Hong as a property holder, Pak Mun-gyu replied that Ch'oe Sanguk had been such an outstanding singer that any repertoire learned from him was considered beyond reproach (personal communication, 21 August 2015).

from Yu Pyŏngch'ŏl (from Kimje in North Chŏlla Province) and Cho Ŭlbong; finally, *kyŏngje* sijo from Nam Sanghyŏk, Kim T'aeyŏng, Kim Tongsu, Son Chŏngmo and others.

In 1953, Yi took the decision to give up his comfortable job in the local government office, and moved to Seoul, a capital which had just been ravaged by the Korean War. He soon found himself spending the majority of his time in a *sijobang* in downtown Seoul, a meeting place for sijo aficionados, where he learned a range of sijo types and regional styles from numerous other singers, including Kim Taeyŏng and Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae.<sup>42</sup> Even after finally finding employment, Yi Yang-gyo did not last in his job for long, given the absences which sprang from his commitment to the *sijobang*, but he finally managed to make a living from singing classes. Yi Yang-gyo met Yi Chuhwan at a singing competition in 1959, started taking classes from him at the National Gugak Center, and learned *kagok* and *kasa* from him over the course of ten years while teaching sijo himself there. However, for some reason, the only one among the four *kasa* originally transmitted by Im Kijun that he learned from Yi Chuhwan was *Suyangsan'ga*. After frustrated attempts to learn the other three through scores alone, Yi Yang-gyo started charting other singers who might teach him. The first of these was Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi who had learned *kasa* from Chang Kyech'un while training as a *kisaeng* at the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn*. Yi Yang-gyo learned *Ch'ŏsaga* from her and then thought of Chang Sa-Hun, who although not a great singer himself, had learned all the *kasa* at the *Yiwangjik aakpu*. Chang Sa-Hun agreed to teach him *Yangyangga*, *Maebwaga*, *Ch'ŏsaga*, a longer version of *Kwŏnjuga* which included four verses (and a different melody during the fourth one, which Ha Kyuil had taught only him), as well as 27 pieces of *chirŭm* sijo and *sasŏl chirŭm* sijo that Chang Sa-Hun had learned from Im Kijun. Yi Yang-gyo was appointed holder for *kasa* as an Intangible Cultural Property in 1975; due to his advanced age, he no longer performs and his status changed to Honorary Property Holder in 2013.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Curiously, for Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae there is no record of longer stays in Seoul during this era in the *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*'s entry on him by Ch'oe Sŏna.

<sup>43</sup> In the context of *naep'oje* sijo, the following passage is found in Moon Hyun (2015:41, footnote 35): "Although Yi Yang-gyo first learned (Western-style) *naep'oje* sijo from Yi Mun'gyo in Sŏsan, Yi Yang-gyo currently sings *kyŏngje* sijo, so Yi Mun-gyo's legacy can be seen to be lost." Given that one singer could surely be assumed to sing in more than one sijo style, this sheds an interesting if somewhat puzzling light on Yi Yang -

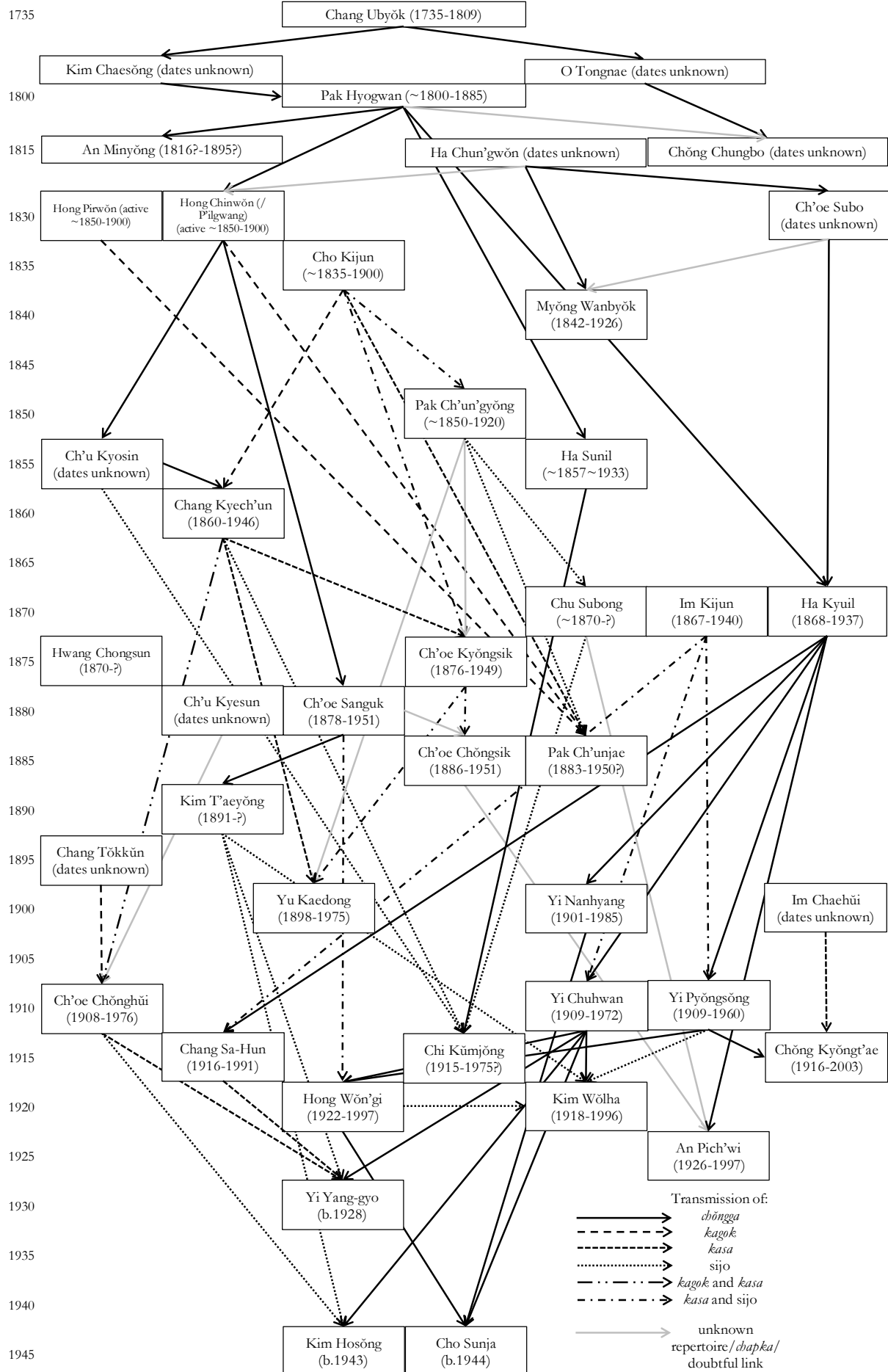


In conclusion, it seems remarkable that not only did three of the four singers discussed in this section start out as amateur singers of *sijo*, but that all four became formidable *sijo* experts and *sijo* singers, with their knowledge of sometimes eclectic *sijo* repertoires going far beyond the mainstream *chŏngga* canon that was expected of them as property holders of *kagok* or *kasa*.

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gyo's self-perception. We can speculate whether he thought it necessary to focus all efforts on one style, or found regional *sijo* incompatible with the repertoire of a property holder; or maybe he simply did not see occasion or capacity to sing or teach *naep'oje sijo*.

Diagram 4.1: The genealogy of *chôngga* (1735-1945)



## Chapter 5. The institutions of *chŏngga*

### Introduction

In this chapter I outline the institutional side to *chŏngga* practice during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, tracing *chŏngga*'s trajectory from a performance practice independent from institutions in late Chosŏn that relied on private sponsors and aficionados, to what remains the present state of institutional fixation with various outlets – as it has been discussed by Howard (2016). The emphasis in this survey is on historical aspects of the institutions involved, the processes of transmission, recruitment, teaching, performance and general activities at the relevant institutions,<sup>1</sup> and finally, where it applies, I examine whether there were greater agendas behind some of these institutions, what they were, and what these institutions' aesthetic outlook on *chŏngga* was or is. The chapter takes liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 as a crucial turning point in the fate of traditional Korean music and is accordingly divided into institutions during Japanese colonial rule (including remnants of earlier institutions) – the Korean Court Music Study Institute, the *kwŏnbŏn* – training schools for female entertainers, the *Yiwangjik aakpu* (Court Music Bureau) and, after Japanese colonial rule, the National Gugak Center, the Gugak National High School, and *kugak* departments in universities.

### 5.1 The *Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpso* (1911-15)

The *Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpso* (Korean Court Music Study Institute, using the gloss of Hahn Man-young 1990) came into existence in 1911 – or 1909 if we consider it to be the same institute as its

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<sup>1</sup> The repertoire changes in these institutions over the course of time will be discussed only in relation to *chŏngga*.

predecessor the *Choyang kurakpu* (Choyang club).<sup>2</sup> The Institute holds a special place in the transmission of *chŏngga* for several reasons. In the first place, it coined the term *chŏngak* in its meaning to denote *chŏngga* and the instrumental *chŏngak* tradition. More importantly, the Institute was the first music education institution in Korea, marking the beginning of institutional support for *chŏngga* and of the institutionalized teaching of *kugak* next to Western music. Private sponsorship of *chŏngga* was, of course, nothing new, given that *chŏngga* practice by *kagaek* had always relied on sponsors. Yet such sponsorship had been limited to concerts rather than educational efforts within the framework of an institute.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, moving *kugak* teaching into an institute which also taught Western music may be seen as the beginning of *kugak*'s trajectory from the private to the institutional realm. The Institute was founded with the hope of receiving support from the disempowered royal court, and such support was granted from 1911 onwards. The Institute was successful in its transmission and preservation efforts until 1916, when it ran out of funding and some of the most celebrated teachers, among them Ha Kyuil, left in protest at its pro-Japanese spirit (according to Song Bang-Song 2007:535). Afterwards, teaching seems to have ceased and the Institute's activities were limited to performances; it became something like a *p'ungnyubang*, a space for performing this music as had existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It closed briefly in 1944 and turned into the *Han'guk chŏnggawŏn* after liberation, in which form it survived into the 1980s.<sup>4</sup>

The Institute had three departments for song, music and instrument making (Song Bang-Song 2007:535), although it is not clear what the first of these actually was, since apparently both Korean and Western vocal traditions were covered in the music department. Park Sung-Hee mentions all three *chŏngga* genres being taught (2012:8), whereas other sources talk of only *kagok* as a subject. *Kagok* was taught by Ha Kyuil and Yi Yŏnghwan, and for a fee classes were offered both for beginners and advanced students. While teaching at the court had been mostly rote

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<sup>2</sup> As it was a club rather than an educational institution, Song Bang-Song points out that the club did not actually teach classes, but was more of a meeting place for aficionados (2007:534).

<sup>3</sup> A paper by Park Sung-Hee (2012) focuses on the years 1910-11 as crucial in the history of Korean music in Seoul.

<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpso' by Chang Sa-Hun.

learning, scores were now compiled and widely used in parallel with the teaching style in Western music courses, and Western staff notations of Korean music were produced for the first time (Hahn Man-young 1990:19). During the first three years of teaching activity, 87 music students entered the institute in three recruitment rounds, 36 of them in the Korean music field. Despite its special place in the history of *chōngga* transmission, functioning as something like a ‘missing link’ between Chosŏn times and the perpetuation of *kugak* education in the *Yiwangjŏk aakpu* discussed below, the Institute was simply not active long enough to warrant a discussion of style taught there. Lacking documentation, since it was similar in its mission to the later *Yiwangjŏk aakpu* and the main *chōngga* teacher Ha Kyuil was the same, its outlook on *chōngga* can be assumed to have been similar.

## 5.2 The *kwōnbōn*

The history of *kisaeng* female entertainers or courtesans in Korea goes back at least to Koryŏ times (Pratt and Rutt 1999:223, for a discussion of *kisaeng* in Chosŏn times see Kim Yung-Chung et al. 1976). *Kisaeng* had been taught at and were resident at the court during the Chosŏn dynasty. Several categories were in place at the end of Chosŏn dynasty to distinguish types of *kisaeng*, depending on whether they were official (belonging to the court) or private, active in Seoul or elsewhere, had husbands or not, and whether they were active in additional occupations as nurses or seamstresses. Additionally sources, often reliant on a 1927 text by Yi Nūnghwa, (e.g. Howard 2002b:985) distinguish three ranks among *kisaeng* at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Kisaeng* of the first rank were associated with the court and upon retirement passed into the second rank. There is an association with prostitution, but this is most clearly established in the case of third-rank *kisaeng* who were not affiliated with the court. When we talk about a ‘husband’ in the context of *kisaeng*, an explanation is in order, since, rather than literal husbands these men may more accurately be seen as managers who might have been “in fact highly reminiscent of the stereotypical pimps in the Western world today” (Park Sung-Hee 2011:291). While Park and other sources state that

*kisaeng* were not legally allowed to get married, Howard claims *kisaeng* in Seoul could get married and there are examples of *kisaeng* during the colonial period who did. With the decline of the royal court during the Japanese colonial period, then, *kisaeng* without a husband, called *mubugi*,<sup>5</sup> started organizing in associations, called *chobap* – also glossed as ‘guild’ – the first of which was the *Hansŏng kisaeng chobap*, later broken up into the *Tadong chobap* and the *Kwanggyo chobap* both of which were licensed in 1913. Similar associations in other cities soon followed, among which especially the one in P’yŏngyang was famous. In 1918, the term *kwŏnbŏn*<sup>6</sup> was adopted for all *chobap* which were henceforth under Japanese supervision. The affiliation of *kisaeng* to altogether four *kwŏnbŏn* which existed in Seoul at the time was partly based on the origin of the *kisaeng*: *Kisaeng* from the Yŏngnam region that were active in Seoul, for example, joined the *Hannam kwŏnbŏn* (previously the *Hannam chobap*). The other three associations were the *Taejeong kwŏnbŏn* (previously the *Tadong chobap*), the *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn* (previously the *Kwanggyo chobap*) and the *Kyŏnghwa kwŏnbŏn* (previously the *Sinch’ang chobap*). In 1940 the three *kwŏnbŏn* active in Seoul at the time were absorbed into the *Samhwa kwŏnbŏn* through a Japanese edict. Table 5.1 adapts a timeline by Kim Minjŏng (2015:40) on the various *kwŏnbŏn* in Seoul during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With regard to dates, there are minor discrepancies from the account outlined here which is based on Song Bang-Song (2007:564-7). Furthermore, Kim makes no mention of an association called *Kwanggyo chobap*.

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<sup>5</sup> 無夫妓 – not have – husband – female entertainer.

<sup>6</sup> 券番 – document – order; in Japanese, the first character differs: 検番 – inspect – order = “reorganization” (after Kwon Dohee, quotation in Pilzer 2006:4, footnote 15); the Korean pronunciation of the Japanese term *kenban* (Pilzer gives the Korean pronunciation of the term as *gyoban*), used to designate similar institutions for *geisha* in Japan.

Year	Competing <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>	Foundation, division and integration of <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>				
1908		<i>Hansŏng kisaeng chohap</i> founded	<i>Tadong kisaeng chohap</i> founded		<i>Sinch'ang kisaeng chohap</i> founded	
1912						
1917			<i>Hannam kisaeng chohap</i> founded			
1918	4 <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hannam kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Taejŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>		<i>Kyŏnghwa kwŏnbŏn</i>
1919					<i>Taedong kwŏnbŏn</i> founded	<i>Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn</i> founded (taking over <i>Kyŏnghwa kwŏnbŏn</i> )
1923						<i>Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn</i>
1925	4 <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hannam kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Taejŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>		<i>Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn</i>
1930	4 <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hannam kwŏnbŏn</i>		<i>Taedong kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn</i>
1933	2 <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>			<i>Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn</i>	
1935	3 <i>kwŏnbŏn</i>	<i>Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn</i>		<i>Chongno kwŏnbŏn</i> founded	<i>Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn</i>	
1942	Integration	Foundation <i>Samhwa kwŏnbŏn</i>				

Table 5.1: Foundation, division and integration of *kwŏnbŏn* in Seoul during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (adapted from Kim Minjŏng 2015:40)

While most sources do not elaborate on the structure of teaching in *kwŏnbŏn*, testimonies by former *kisaeng* reveal that the teaching was similar to school teaching at the time, but focused on music, dance, and codes of behaviour. Teaching and other activities at the *kwŏnbŏn* unsurprisingly differed from those at the *Aakpu* discussed below, in accordance with the preferences of the clients, and Pilzer writes that “the gisaeng school, focused as it was on producing young women for men’s entertainment, was not designed as an atmosphere in which women could mature as artists” (2006:6). Nevertheless, *chŏngga* seems to have been taught in all *kwŏnbŏn* at all times, next to a range of other genres such as popular songs and folk songs, and instruments, as well as Korean dance, Japanese songs and dance, and Western dance (Song Bang-Song 2007:566-567). Music was learned both in group and private classes and allowed for the specialization of *kisaeng* according to their talents. The teachers at the *kwŏnbŏn* were some of the most accomplished

musicians active at the time, and in the area of *chŏngga* they included Chang Kyech'un, Cho Yŏngho and Ha Kyuil. So, the high artistic standard at the *kwŏnbŏn* is beyond question. After liberation, most *kisaeng* tried to conceal their identities due to the bad reputation of their profession, which has put an obstacle in the way of research about them and the musical activities at the *kwŏnbŏn* that they were part of. It is only much more recently that a few testimonies from former *kisaeng* have surfaced (Park Sung-Hee 2011:272, 276-278). Although a register of *kisaeng* active at the time, the *Chosŏn mŭn pogam*, in which *kisaeng* are listed with their abilities and specialities – namely languages and performance genres – was published in 1918 (Illustration 5.1 in the appendix shows what such profiles looked like), background details about the *kisaeng* remain scarce, so it is hard to ascertain who they were and how they came to be *kisaeng*. Park Sung-Hee discusses the ways in which a girl could become a *kisaeng* during later Chosŏn times: a *kisaeng* inheriting the status from her mother seems to have been most common, but a girl could also become a *kisaeng* through adoption when she was orphaned, through human trafficking, as a punishment, because of poverty in the family, or by her own choice because of an attraction to the lifestyle (2011:263-265). The two *kisaeng* whose testimonies Park quotations (2011:277-278) entered the *kwŏnbŏn* around the age of eleven and seem to have chosen to do so on their own accord due to the opportunities it offered, albeit coaxed to a certain degree.<sup>1</sup> The following quotation from Lie<sup>2</sup> almost paints becoming a *kisaeng* as an elite endeavour: “The Pyongyang school sought to train elite prostitutes; its high tuition precluded poorer women from enrolling in the school” (1995:313). Research by Park Sung-Hee confirms both the tuition fees and the strict administration of this particular *kwŏnbŏn* (2011:279). This suggests an ambiguous picture of the status of the *kwŏnbŏn* and the girls who enrolled in it, as if becoming a *kisaeng* was a legitimate career choice and something that many girls would have aspired to. While it is true that

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<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that I don't consider becoming a *kisaeng* as a “choice” a pre-adolescent girl is in a position to make.

<sup>2</sup> His paper, *The Transformation of sexual work in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Korea*, has a very different focus from the other research cited here, so it presents a somewhat undifferentiated picture of *kisaeng* and some of the information appears to be incorrect. Lie's usage of *kisaeng* as synonymous with ‘prostitute’ is especially problematic; while most *kisaeng* may be seen as having been prostitutes, clearly not all prostitutes in Korea during the colonial period were *kisaeng*, and much less had they all enrolled at a *kwŏnbŏn*.



the *kwŏnbŏn* may have offered a welcome opportunity for education or even the prospect of a secure living, the exploitative nature of an institution that grooms elementary-school-aged girls for sexual services is evident. Howard mentions, citing Japanese ethnographers, that around 1930 many *kisaeng* in the *kwŏnbŏn* came from shaman families (2002b:985). Again, Pilzer notes how “[t]he new mobility brought about by the transportation system and migration into the cities brought many commoner girls into the gisaeng schools, changing the traditional hereditary nature of gisaeng institutions” (2006:298). Although the widespread usage of the distinction between the three above-mentioned ranks of *kisaeng* is disputed, it is clear that the Japanese colonial period increasingly eroded whatever distinctions there may have been between them (see Pilzer 2006:295-7, especially footnote 13), so in the public perception *kisaeng* became increasingly and reductively associated with prostitution. Lie shows how sexual work in general saw an increase during the Japanese colonial period with prostitutes from poor rural areas being incorporated into the ranks of sexual workers, further diminishing the perception of *kisaeng* as educated and cultivated entertainers: such girls “were often sold to sexual entrepreneurs by their impoverished families. Although they continued to sing, dance, and entertain like their Yi dynasty counterparts, they were primarily sexual workers” (Lie 1995:313).

If it was not for the crude and unfortunate circumstances of the Japanese colonial era, it could be seen as a historical irony that *chŏngga* survived at two institutions so diametrically opposed in their purpose and outlook as the *Aakpu* and the multiple *kwŏnbŏn*, although both can be seen as successors to institutions formerly part of Chosŏn-era court culture. The explicit aim of the *kwŏnbŏn* was to educate professional female entertainers, versed first and foremost in song and dance, likewise a remnant of pre-modern cultural expressions in a rapidly modernizing Korea. Although teachers like Ha Kyuil taught both at *kwŏnbŏn* and the *Aakpu*, the aesthetic of song turned out very differently at these institutions, given that the aesthetic ideal and the audiences could not have been more different.<sup>3</sup> From a modern viewpoint interested in artistic diversity, the

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<sup>3</sup> The respective *kagok* styles of two singers from different *kwŏnbŏn* are discussed, analyzed and compared in a recent PhD thesis by Kim Minjŏng (2015).

*kwŏnbŏn* are a quarry of Chosŏn-era aesthetic diversity, with a range of singers from different backgrounds, contrasting the uniformity of the Ha Kyuil style at the *Aakpu*. Singers from the *kwŏnbŏn*, and *kisaeng*-style delivery of *chŏngga* have played a subordinate role in the *Aakpu*-lineage-dominated historical narrative of *chŏngga*, but they have continued to influence later singers. Accordingly, they constitute an alternative dimension of *chŏngga* that the mainstream has reluctantly and belatedly acknowledged and welcomed in the form of the appointment of Cho Sunja<sup>4</sup> in 2001 as one of the property holders of *kagok*. This protracted disregard for the *kwŏnbŏn* as institutions of musical preservation is largely the result of the negative public image of *kisaeng* after liberation which not only made life difficult for the women who had studied at the *kwŏnbŏn*, but also had a negative influence on the status of Korean traditional music as a whole. Hence, Song relates how:

Korea's traditional music which was not included in school curricula during the Japanese colonial period was therefore partly transmitted thanks to the female entertainers at the *kwŏnbŏn*, institutions that were not part of the [official education] system. This circumstance surrounding traditional music gave it a standing of disapproval in society for some time after liberation, and turned into a hindrance to the development of traditional music. Yet, both the master singers who transmitted part of the canon to the *kisaeng* at the *kwŏnbŏn*, and the *kisaeng* who back then appeared in the mass media contributed to the transmission of traditional music (Song Bang-Song 2007:567).

However, interest and appraisal of *kisaeng* as artists and musicians, especially by Western scholars, “has motivated Korean scholars to reconsider the importance of *kisaeng* in traditional Korean culture, including music” (Park Sung-Hee 2011:272).<sup>5</sup> With Lie pointing out with regard to *kisaeng* that “[s]tate patronage gave way to commercial interests” (1995:313) during the colonial era, it follows that *kisaeng* associations were organized

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<sup>4</sup> Cho Sunja (b.1948) learned from Yi Chuhwan, Yi Nanhyang and Hong Wŏn-gi; Yi Nanhyang was a *kisaeng* at the *Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn*.

<sup>5</sup> There is anecdotal evidence that in some cases such perceptions apparently persist among Koreans to the present day: Hilary Finchum-Sung, ethnomusicology and theory professor at Seoul National University, once commented to me that she had been berated for suggesting a girl learn the *kayagŭm* zither, which still held negative associations as a “*kisaeng* instrument” (personal communication 2010).

according to the logic of the marketplace. Learning Japanese songs has no connection whatsoever with the preservation of Korean music, so the survival of *chŏngga* in *kwŏnbŏn* speaks to a preference for these genres in the clientele of *kwŏnbŏn*. It is commonly noted that interest in *chŏngga* was already waning before the Japanese colonial period (Song Bang-Song 2007:534; Yi Pohyŏng, personal communication, 11 August 2015). This seems to suggest that there was a market for *chŏngga* performances by *kisaeng*, but not *kagae*. Lie writes further: “Although yangban, rich urbanites, and high government officials continued to frequent *kisaeng* restaurants, the primary clientele of sexual work became Japanese colonial officials, soldiers, and businessmen” (1995:313). A large part of these audiences – at least the Japanese clients – must be assumed to have been undiscerning about *chŏngga*, so it can be concluded that even in this last context in which *chŏngga* were still performed for a paying audience, the music itself was increasingly divorced from the aesthetic evaluation it had formerly enjoyed. Reflecting on this, Pilzer writes:

As the institutions of the gisaeng collapsed into a popular colonial entertainment industry, the percentage of time that female professional entertainers devoted to the traditional arts steadily declined, and as it did, gisaeng traditions suffered. The industry increasingly demanded modern popular repertoires, and the emerging strata [sic] of star female performers of popular music was composed in large part of gisaeng or former gisaeng (2006:5-6).

### 5.3 The *Yiwangjik aakpu* (1921-1945)

The *Yiwangjik aakpu* has its origins in the Royal Music Institute (*Changgwŏn*) which had existed under this name since before 1470 and up until 1910, although at times different names were introduced, these names being later dropped in favour of ‘*Changgwŏn*’ again. In turn, the *Changgwŏn* is seen as the successor of various court music institutes that existed already in Koryŏ times. Over the entire span of the Chosŏn dynasty, the institute employed and had as its task the training of the various types of court musicians needed for court rituals and other events,

including musicians and dancers of all ages, male and female. Towards the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, the Institute underwent changes that included relocation, renaming and a shrinking in the number of musicians employed. The names that the Institute bore during this later time, with the corresponding numbers of musicians, are as follows: *Kyobangsa* (1897, 772 musicians), *Changakkwŏ* (1907, 305 musicians), *Changakpu* (1908, 240). In 1910, the Institute was dissolved, but the 189 musicians remaining continued their activity in the *Yiwangjik aaktae*; this no longer staged official rituals, but performed only in private. The name *Yiwangjik aakpu*, or Yi [Chosŏn] King's Court Music Bureau, was adopted in 1913,<sup>6</sup> yet in subsequent years, the number of musicians continued to shrink due to financial constraints, reaching their lowest number in 1920.<sup>7</sup> From 1920, the *Yiwangjik aakpu* started recruiting new music students, called *aaksaeng*, once more, now under the patronage of the Japanese colonial government, likely thanks to the advocacy of Japanese musicologist Tanabe Hisao (Sung Ki-Ryun 2004:143; see also Howard 2002b:121-2), but the number of employed musicians was cut further with only around 30 remaining at the end of the Japanese colonial period. In 1925, the *Yiwangjik aakpu*<sup>8</sup> moved once more to the place it inhabited until 1948. At that time, a hiatus occurred and the government took over responsibility, relocating it to Busan during the Korean War in 1951 as what is now known as the National Gugak Center. The *Yiwangjik aakpu* had as its task the transmission, teaching and performance of traditional Korean music and dance genres, specifically those formerly practised at the royal court, but also *chŏngak*, and the latter means that it is therefore one of the crucial links in *chŏngga* transmission from the Chosŏn dynasty to the post-liberation period.

Being a musician at the royal court during the Chosŏn dynasty had been largely a hereditary profession, but this was changed at the *Aakpu*, theoretically giving anyone talented an opportunity for education in traditional music. Hahn Man-young points out that in the first round of admission in 1920 many of the students were children of institute musicians, “so the

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<sup>6</sup> Hahn Man-young gives 1922 as the date (1990).

<sup>7</sup> After Song Bang-Song in Kungnip Kugagwŏn (various) 2001:17-22. Numbers differ slightly across different sources.

<sup>8</sup> According to Lee Jeonghee the *Aakpu* adopted its name only then (2004:1)

age-old practice of inheritance had hardly altered” (1990:17). Sung Ki-Ryun’s account meanwhile paints this not so much as favouritism, but a result of the *Aakpu*’s recruitment scheme failing to attract public attention until the mid-1920s (2004:164). Indeed, interest at the beginning seems to have been low, and a proper entrance exam was put in place only from 1925 onwards. Promising students were admitted to a scholarship programme in, altogether, seven recruitment rounds consisting of increasing student numbers from nine in the first to 25 students who were admitted in the last round.<sup>9</sup> As has been discussed in Chapter 4, a great number of Korea’s most seminal and influential musicians, scholars and *kugak* bureaucrats trace their intellectual and artistic origins to the *Aakpu*.<sup>10</sup> As such, the *Aakpu* is the single most significant seedbed of contemporary traditional Korean music as far as *aak* and *chŏngak* are concerned. The period of training was three years at first, four years from the second round and five years from 1925 onwards. At times, gaps occurred between graduation and the next recruitment round. For example, a simple calculation reveals that between 1924 and 1926 no more than three students can have remained at the *Aakpu*. *Chŏngga* were made part of the curriculum from 1926 onwards when Ha Kyuil became an instructor at the *Aakpu* (Sung Ki-Ryun 2004:146; Song Hyejin 2001:355). A simple comparison of dates shows that he started teaching at the *Aakpu* about ten years after leaving the *Chosŏn chŏngak chŏnsŭpso* discussed above, which leaves a 13-year gap during which *chŏngga* were hardly if at all taught elsewhere than the *kwŏnbŏn*. The original advertisement for the third recruitment round in 1926 (reproduced in Sung Ki-Ryun 2004:143) specifies an admissible age range from 11 to 17 years for prospective students. A comparison of some of the *Aakpu* students’ birth dates and their respective recruitment rounds renders their actual entrance age, so that in the second round (in 1922), Yi Pyŏngsŏng and Kim Ch’ŏnhŭng were admitted both aged 13, in the third round (in 1926) Yi Chuhwan and Yi Sŏkjae were admitted, aged 17 and 14, respectively, and in the fourth round (in 1931) Chang Sa-Hun and Kim Kisu were admitted, aged 15 and 14 respectively. Howard reports that in later years competition for a place was fierce as

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<sup>9</sup> Students admitted in the last round were dismissed upon liberation from Japanese colonial rule.

<sup>10</sup> A list of some of the most notable scholars and musicians that have their roots at the *Aakpu* is given by Howard (2002b:989).

the bursary provided at the *Aakpu* was for many a rare opportunity for education (2002b:989), although applicants do seem to have been scarce in the first two recruitment rounds.

Music instruction at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* started with the foundation of the institute's own training school, the *Yiwangjik aakpuwŏn yangsŏngso*, in 1920. From 1926 onwards, after the programme had been extended to last five years, such a five-year period was divided into two years of general education which included mathematics, literature and English, next to basic music classes in theory, singing, instruments and so on, followed by three years of major courses in advanced instruments, such as *kayagŭm* and *komun'go*.<sup>11</sup> *Chŏngga*, not a separate major, were taught to all students from the third year onwards by Ha Kyuil and, after he joined the institute, Im Kijun. Presumably based on information from Sŏng Kyŏngnin, Song Bang-Song explains that the teaching method employed was generally rote learning, called *kujŏnsimsu*<sup>12</sup> in Korean, without the use of scores, and that students who were able to recall correctly the melody parts learned the previous day would be allowed to continue with their training (2007:561). However, more recent<sup>13</sup> research by Sung Ki-Ryun based on interviews with former students suggests that the teaching style had been changed and modernized considerably from *Changagwŏn* times, partly because unlike the hereditary musicians at the *Changagwŏn* who had learned music almost from birth, the music students at the *Aakpu* were of comparatively advanced age to be starting a musical education, and this both allowed for less time to learn new pieces and necessitated more efficient methods. The new circumstances are reflected particularly with regard to two aspects: the use of scores which Sung Ki-Ryun shows were compiled for educational purposes and used as teaching material at least in some of the later recruitment rounds, as well as the introduction of Western music in the classes from 1928 onwards. Both these changes were brought about through the agency of Kim Yŏngje and Ham Hwajin, who were chiefly responsible for the *Aakpu*'s educational structure and who laid the roots for *kugak*'s trajectory into the university

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<sup>11</sup> See Sung Ki-Ryun (2004) for a detailed account of the *Yiwangjik aakpu*'s educational structure.

<sup>12</sup> 口傳心授 – mouth – transmit – heart – give = “teaching with words and heart”.

<sup>13</sup> The publication date of 2007 for Song Bang-Song's research refers to the revised edition.

departments and schools in a modernized education system after liberation (2004:130-5). The way in which Ha Kyuil taught his classes is reported as follows by Sŏng Kyŏngnin:

As we started to learn *kagok*, old master Ha would personally go about writing down the *kagok* piece to be learned in *chŏngganbo* notation and then instructed us with that score. That was because even at that time there was not one *kagok* score worth using as teaching material. But because the number of spaces on the notation paper that master Ha used was different from that on the one used nowadays, it looked complicated and pedantic with 32 spaces. Nevertheless you could not help but marvel at his skills in notating and meticulously singling out pitch, meter, lyrics, singing style and even things like *sigimsae*! When class had finished, master Ha took out the score learned that day and asked us to copy it for later study. Then someone who was good at writing with chalk wrote the piece on the big blackboard with lines demarcating 32 spaces from where we copied it for later study. That was how some forty songs of male *kagok*, 27 songs of female *kagok*, 8 *kasa* and the majority of *sijo* were transmitted in the first vocal notations according to master Ha's system. (*Han'guk ūmak non'go*, Tonghwa ch'ulp'an konga, p.177 (1976), quotation in Sung Ki-Ryun 2004:146)

The *Yiwangjik aakpumŏn yangsŏngso* was the predecessor of the *Kugaksa yangsŏngso*, a similar training school belonging to the National Gugak Center which branched off into the Gugak National [sic] High and Middle School in 1978 which will be discussed below. Given the premature decline of the *Chŏngak chŏnsŏpso* discussed earlier, it was at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* that *chŏngga* first formally took root in the institutional teaching of Korean music, and their transmission was continued at the National Gugak Center after liberation.

As musicians for the staging of rituals were scarce, most students who went through the *Yiwangjik aakpumŏn yangsŏngso* were hired after graduation, first as *aaksubo* (musical trainees) and later as *aaksu* (regular musicians). In fact, many of them unofficially continued their education at the *Aakpu* by auditing all sorts of classes once hired. From 1932, monthly regular concerts were held by an ensemble of *Aakpu* musicians, including trainees and at times students (Sung Ki-Ryun 2004:158), formed for this purpose; both the concerts which focused on solo performances and

the ensemble itself are referred to as *yisŭphoe*.<sup>14</sup> Such performances were opened to the public from 1938 onwards in a development that marked the first time the general public had a chance to experience *aak*, and altogether around 150 *yisŭphoe* were held between 1932 and 1944. The focus of *yisŭphoe* seems to have been the evaluation of the musicians, trainees and students, and they are described by Chang Sa-Hun as follows:

At the end of the 1930s, all of the more than 50 musicians at the *Yiwangjik aakpu* except Kim Yŏngje, Ham Hwajin, Yi Sugyŏng, Ch'oe Sunyŏng, Kim Kyesŏn, Kim Kisu and Yi Yongjin were novices. *Yisŭphoe* meant gatherings that were introduced so the old musicians' tradition could be transmitted to these young *aak* students in regular monthly presentations. If we want to focus just on the most essential aspects of these *yisŭphoe*, then they can be laid out roughly as follows: *yisŭphoe* were hosted once a month on a Thursday night, and the performance time was just under two hours. The performance mode was solo and ensemble recitals with a focus on the former. In every meeting some were selected by the jury, the presented programme was rated as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> rank, and once a year those with the best evaluation received a substantial award.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the close association of all three *chŏngga* genres nowadays, Song Hyejin (2001:355) points out that this was much less normal at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She calls the inclusion of *sijo* in the *Aakpu*'s curriculum surprising, given that neither of the teachers particularly favoured the genre, and *sijo* was not even once performed in radio broadcasts by *Aakpu* musicians. *Kasa* similarly took a backseat to *kagok* and was performed only rarely. The programmes of 135 from among the around 150 *yisŭphoe* are known, and we can observe a similar hierarchy of appreciation of the three genres in them. *Kagok* featured in almost every instance, and *kasa* in 58 of the performances, but *sijo* was performed in only 33 of the 135 *yisŭphoe* by, altogether, 16 different music students. The students were Pak Ch'angjin (who gave six performances), Kim Chŏnnyong and Kim Sŏndŭk (four performances each), Yi Chaech'ŏn, Wang Chongjin, Pak Noa, Kim Ponam, Yi Chuhwan and Chu Sŏngbae (two performances each),

<sup>14</sup> *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Yisŭphoe' by Chang Sa-Hun.

<sup>15</sup> *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Yisŭphoe' by Chang Sa-Hun. See also Song Hyejin in Kungnip Kugagwŏn (various) 2001:331-57.



and Yi Pyöngsöng, Hong Wön'gi, Kim Chinhwan, Pak Söngjae, Kim Ch'öryöng, Hong Yun'gi and Kim Söngjin (one performance each) (2001:357).

The activities of the *Yimangjik aakpu* can be summarized as being, first, the education of music students and the preservation and transmission of the music from the royal palace, second, appearances in radio broadcasts (from 1934 onwards), and third, regular performances of the two court sacrificial rituals, *Chongmyo cheryeak* and *Munmyo cheryeak*. Fourth, the compilation of musical writings, notations and a history of Korean music, fifth, transcription of *aak* pieces into Western notation, and sixth, the *yisŭphoe* (Song Bang-Song 2007:552, an exhaustive survey of further activities such as special performances is given in Lee Jeonghee 2004).

In the political climate of the occupation, the overriding agenda of those involved in the transmission of *chöngga* and other genres was ensuring the future of *aak* and *chöngak*. This, though, seemed constantly uncertain and endangered, and Sung Ki-Ryun reports how in the exams that the students at the *Aakpu* had to take twice a year the focus was on accurate memorization of the taught repertoire rather than on aesthetic concerns of musical expression, evidencing a preoccupation with transmission as the main focus at the *Aakpu* (2004:159). In comparison to the *kwönbön*, however, the primacy of *chöngga*'s aesthetic vision at the *Aakpu* is unquestioned, since the performers did not depend on a paying audience and accordingly did not have to take popular taste into account, unlike their Chosön-era *kagaek* counterparts where repertoire was adjusted to suit the taste of audiences. In terms of *chöngga* aesthetics, the *Aakpu* was biased towards the pre-modern class system in Korea. Ha Kyuil, as a *chungin kagaek* boasting an impressive teaching lineage was thus the main authority in matters of *chöngga*, whereas commoner-class Im Kijun was relegated to teaching those songs that Ha Kyuil considered too vulgar to sing himself. In retrospect, it even seems surprising that the four *kasa* and the parts of the *sijo* canon that were taught by Im Kijun were included at all in the *Aakpu* curriculum. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the *Aakpu* was a stable sanctuary that allowed *chöngga* to be transmitted relatively unfettered by extra-musical concerns for a long time, but at the price of reduced artistic diversity,

a diversity that *chōngga*, unlike *aak* being a genre popular in the private realm, had enjoyed in Chosŏn times.

#### 5.4 The National Gugak Center

The National Gugak Center (*Kungnip kugagwŏn*)<sup>16</sup> is the successor of the *Yiwangjik aakpu* and the most important and powerful institution in the world of *kugak*. The Center performs, researches, represents and curates, and in doing so employs musicians, stages concerts, sends performers abroad, and publishes voluminous anthologies, among other activities. The enormous complex next to the Seoul Arts Center in Sŏch'o-dong, Seoul, houses offices, practice spaces, concert halls and stages, a small instrument museum, dance studios, cafeterias, and more. Due to its research division, library and archive, the Center is as much an authority on *kugak*'s interpretation and place in the modern world as a channel of promotion for *kugak* at home, and internationally as an agent of cultural diplomacy.<sup>17</sup>

Like the *Aakpu* that it took over from, it lays claim to being the successor of previous court music institutes that go back many centuries: "The historical account, set out not least in a series of celebratory volumes for [the Center's] thirtieth, fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries compresses a variety of offices that have existed for court music since the seventh century into a unitary timeline, although continuity is claimed on the basis of patchy documentation" (Howard 2016:456). Yet, the Center's achievements in safeguarding the tradition through the turbulent post-liberation times which saw a number of lean years reminiscent of the *Aakpu*'s early period is by any account a remarkable achievement: Following liberation, the *Aakpu* was briefly renamed *Kuwanggung aakpu* (Old Emperor's Palace Music Office; Hahn Man-young 1990:27) before the name *Kungnip kugagwŏn* was adopted. Since funding was unavailable after liberation, musicians had

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<sup>16</sup> The English name has changed over the years from National Classical Music Institute in 1951 to the Korean Traditional Performing Arts Center (1989), National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (1995) and finally its current name in 2010, "reflecting incremental changes and shifts in operation" (Howard 2016:456).

<sup>17</sup> Howard discusses performances of *kugak* abroad, naming "cultural diplomacy" those occasions where repertoire with a "high watermark" is performed as part of an agenda to promote *kugak* "without any direct expectation of financial returns" (2008a:4).

to initially rely on their own initiatives for maintaining their activities. During this time the *Kuwanggung aakpu* started monthly sijo classes to broaden the base of people interested in *kugak*. A sijo study society was founded with Yi Pyŏnggi, a leading sijo literature scholar, as its chairman. This aimed to spread knowledge about the sung form of sijo. A *kugak* appreciation programme given by Sŏng Kyŏngnin started to air on Seoul's *Chungang pangsongguk* (Seoul Central Radio Station) and together with the later establishment of a *kugak* society by the same station, the *Aakpu*'s financial struggles began to be ameliorated (Song Bang-Song 2007:696). Nationalization of the institute was proposed upon Korea becoming a republic in 1948 and decreed officially in 1950. During the Korean War, the institute relocated to Busan, opening officially in 1951 with only 13 musicians and four administrators left, returning to Seoul after the war and resuming operations there in 1955. In the following years, the number of musicians employed grew to more than 100. The Center has been in operation constantly since then, opening affiliated regional centres in Namwŏn, Chindo and Busan, with two additional facilities under construction, and it currently employs some 550 musicians, dancers, researchers and administrators (Howard 2016:455). In the meantime, the Center's policies have changed so as to include patronage of a broader *kugak* canon encompassing various folk arts and, recently, fusion genres, which sits in contrast to the fostering of only court and literati genres at the *Yiwangjik aakpu*.

Education was a central function of the Center during its first decades after the Korean War, from 1955 to 1972. In 1955, the *Kugaksa yangsŏngso*, a teaching establishment affiliated with the Center as a post-liberation counterpart to the *Aakpu yangsŏngso*, admitted its first enrolment of 30 middle-school-aged students for a three-year scholarship programme. This formed a continuation of the scheme that was in place earlier at the *Aakpu*. Three years later, a follow-up high-school programme was added, extending the programme length to six years (Song Bang-Song 2007:704-5). With the establishment of the first *kugak* department at Seoul National University, discussed below in the section on *kugak* at universities, the graduates of the Center's programme gained a chance to continue their studies at the university level, and seven of the first enrolment's 17

graduates moved up to this new *kugak* department in 1961. With increased funding in 1962, the school intake was raised to 60 students, who for the first time included 20 female students, thus marking what may be seen as a return to *Changagwŏn* times when female musicians had been trained next to male students (no female students were ever admitted to the *Aakpu*). The significant difference to *Changagwŏn* times was, of course, that the Center's female students were not going on to become *kisaeng*. Further subjects were also added and, given that Yi Chuhwan was appointed as the Center's first director in 1951, *chŏngga* were presumably taught from the beginning, although they are not included in a slimmed-down list of the mostly instrument majors that Song (2007:705) details for the period before 1962. In other words, 1962 was the first time in Korean history that a woman could enrol in an institution to learn to sing *chŏngga* professionally and expect to become, on graduation, something other than a *kisaeng*.

In 1972, the *Kugaksa yangsŏngso* became independent from the Center, turning into the Gugak National High School (to be discussed in the next section). With this development, the Center's focus changed towards the multiple functions of representation, curation, performance and research. Today, then, although classes are still available at the Center, the main part of *kugak* teaching takes place at the Gugak High School and in *kugak* departments at universities, while the classes at the Center serve a more representative function in bringing *kugak* closer to aficionados, the general public, students, and foreigners. Its regular classes are taught at different levels and to various demographics, while workshops include day trips by school classes or foreigners in Korean language and culture courses, as well as week-long, two-week-long, and semester-long programmes for music scholars from abroad. So, while classes are taught by first-rate performers and classes may be of high quality, the main teaching of professional performers takes place in private classes, at the Gugak High school or in university departments, often given by some of the same singers active at the Center.

The Center's activities over the years have been diverse, showing similarities but also differences compared to those of its predecessor, the *Aakpu*. Furthermore, they have changed

over time. Beginning in 1964, performers employed at the Center began to frequently embark on tours abroad. They went abroad 20 times by 1979 (Hahn Man-young 1990:39-40) and have thus shaped foreigners' impressions of *kugak*. The decision to bring folk arts into the Center from the early 1970s is frequently seen as one decision to help facilitate such performance tours abroad (Hahn Man-young 1990:35, Howard 2016:463), while a spirit of innovation in bringing about new compositions in a traditional idiom also dates back to this period. Research conducted at the Center, starting with mostly compilation, notation, transcription and documentation efforts, resulted in a series of records and notation anthologies from the late 1960s onwards.

Nowadays, the Center's activities include concerts of all kinds, workshops, classes, research and curatorial efforts. The Center is Korea's face of *kugak* to both domestic and foreign audiences; few university or high school students in Korea will not have heard of it. *Kugak* concerts can be heard almost every day on one of the Center's various stages at – in my experience – a low cost or often for free,<sup>18</sup> and *chŏngga* are a regular feature in these concerts which will include series and cycles, modern adaptations such as for example *kagok* plays, evenings of mixed repertoire that include folk and court music, and more programmatic features. Some, for example, will focus exclusively on the twelve *kasa*, some will be more didactic programmes starting with spoken introductions or even inviting participation from the audience – as happened in a recital in which my teacher Moon Hyun taught the audience to sing along to the first *chang* of *sijo*.

The Center as a whole is thus responsible for a great part of whatever visibility *kugak*, including *chŏngga*, has in Korea and abroad. The Center maintains a comprehensive and easy-to-navigate homepage ([gugak.go.kr](http://gugak.go.kr)) and a YouTube channel ([youtube.com/user/gugak1951](https://www.youtube.com/user/gugak1951)) featuring many of the splendid performances taking place at the Center. As of the writing of this thesis (2017), there were seven *chŏngga* singers employed at the Center's *chŏnggaktan*, or *chŏnggak*

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<sup>18</sup> Howard describes the situation as follows: “Subsidies are camouflaged in publicity that prints high ticket prices for concerts, but the reality is that free admission remains the norm: a performer or ensemble (or their school/university or their students) hires a venue or pays in bulk for tickets that are then distributed to and by students, families and others; having covered its costs, the venue hands out free tickets at the door” (2016:462).

ensemble: Yi Chuna, Hong Ch'angnam, Kim Pyŏngo, Moon Hyun (b.1958), Yi Chŏnggyu, Pak Chinhŭi and Cho Ilha (birthdates are unavailable for most of these singers, but they are between 30 and 60 years old).<sup>19</sup>

The Center is the largest recipient of arts funding from the Korean government and in 2014 received the equivalent of \$48 million (Howard 2016:462). Howard describes how the foundation of the Center served two functions at the beginning: that of reinforcing South Korea's claim to the entire peninsula as the legitimate successor of pre-division Korea, and that of raising traditional music to the status of an icon of Korean identity in the face of modernization and Westernization (2016:455). After the safeguarding of the tradition through institutionalization was achieved, the Center has over the decades turned to "broadening its base" (2016:464) by including in the canon first folk music<sup>20</sup> and later a newly created genre that mixes "Korean and Western soundworlds" (2016:463), namely *kugak* fusion, thereby barring the former from entering the marketplace and effectively buying the latter genre out of the marketplace. Until it became part of the Center activities, *kugak* fusion had been a response to increasing competition among *kugak* performance graduates and a resulting need to find a niche in the market economy. While these policies served to cement the Center's monopoly on the interpretive control of *kugak*, they have been criticized as weakening its stance as an arbiter of authenticity, artistic quality and integrity, in respect to which it is claimed that by "promot[ing] what audiences are perceived to want" the Center is "weaken[ing] the core values of kugak" (2016:464). Broadening the base has

<sup>19</sup> In the Center's concerts, however, other people beyond these seven are featured singing *chŏngga*, too; they may be the singers' students, possibly people from outside the Center, or sometimes musicians listed with another speciality, such as my former *kŏmun'go* teacher Yi Pangsil, employed primarily as a *kŏmun'go* player, whom I recognized singing *Maehwaga*, one of the twelve *kasa*, in one of the videos. Yi Hŭijae is a *chŏngga* singer active at the Gugak Center in Busan. The Namwŏn Center is dedicated to folk music and does not employ *chŏngga* singers; whether the Center in Chindo does I have not investigated, but I consider it unlikely.

<sup>20</sup> Summarized by Howard as '*min'gan* music', the use of which he defends (2016:453), but which is slightly confusing in this context, as *chŏngak* is commonly subsumed under *min'gan* music, too, and was part of the Center's canon right from the beginning, after having entered the Korean Court Music Study Institute in 1911. The terminology around *min'gan* (民間 – the people – space = "among the people") music is defined by Song Bang-Song as follows: "In music history, all strands of music before modernity that were transmitted outside the royal court are classified as *min'gan* music. As concerns the time after liberation though, the term "*minsok* [folk] music" that equals "*min'gan* music" in meaning is used in symmetry with *aak* or *chŏngak*" (2007:695). According to Song's definition, *min'gan* music cannot be applied to music after 1945, but would denote all *kugak* except *aak* before 1945. Howard notes that it is among those musicians who considered themselves part of the folk heritage that *min'gan* is being used, partly as a rejection of the term *kugak* (personal communication, August 2017).

also meant incurring further costs that perpetuate the existence of circular modes of exchange and relegate the possibility of a dynamic *kugak* scene based on an entrepreneurial mode of exchange to a distant future, so that state sponsorship of *kugak* fusion “undermines the neoliberal mission to privatize [...] leaving a spiralling, ever-more expensive, requirement to continue funding. This has implications for the sustainability not just of music, but of intangible cultural heritage across the world” (Howard 2016:464)

*Chōngga* have been largely untouched by these shifting policies. Being primarily the music of an educated elite, they would have stood little chance of survival without state patronage, as is evidenced by the decline in *chōngga* practice during the Japanese colonial period. *Kugak* fusion as a genre that seeks popularity has largely ignored *chōngga* as a starting point for innovation, and in a survey of public concerts I carried out in Seoul’s royal palaces in the summer of 2011 there was not a single *chōngga*-based outfit, although the series at Tōksu Palace was specifically dedicated to *kugak* fusion. Moon Hyun writes:

In the field of performance, the 2000s mark a turning point. While there were performances that focused on *chōngga* – including *sijo* – before, it was only with the spread of popularly acclaimed *kugak* fusion, and thanks to young composers and a couple of *kugak* fusion performance groups that fusion *chōngga* pieces started being composed, but for now these are not as numerous as those written for other *kugak* instruments (2015:30).

With some exceptions, experiments in the idiom of *chōngga* tend towards what is termed *ch’angjak kugak*: serious modern compositions mostly by *kugak* composers who are not driven by material need or an appeal to popularity in their artistic endeavours.<sup>21</sup> Moon Hyun divides such compositions into two categories, namely, those that change the melody of the vocal parts, and those that leave the original vocal parts intact with only minor changes in shape or tempo, but add new accompaniment or arrangements (2015:53-4). Some of the younger *chōngga* singers

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<sup>21</sup> *Chōngga*-related *ch’angjak kugak*, including a list of notable composers and compositions, is discussed in Moon Hyun (2015: 50-4).

familiar to me who have appeared in productions that match the category of *kugak* fusion are Pak Minhŭi (b.1983), Pak Chinhŭi, Yi Yugyŏng and Ha Yunju (birthdates are unavailable for these singers, but they are between 25-35 years old as of the writing of this thesis).<sup>22</sup>

As a postscript to this section, it is worth adding that next to “[o]ther state and private organizations [that] have tended to mount single events and then decay” (after Hahn Man-young 1990:30) shortly after liberation or later, another institution once existed that first adopted the name *Kugagwŏn*, changing it to *Taehan kugagwŏn* (Korean Traditional Music Institute, to use Howard’s gloss in the translation of Hahn 1990:29) after the establishment of its *Kungnip* – national, government-sponsored – counterpart.<sup>23</sup> This second institute operated with Ham Hwajin as its first director in 1945. As a private institute with a focus on folk music, it nevertheless included a department for *chŏngak* in which Yi Pyŏngsŏng was active. A dispute around the two institutes’ names sheds an interesting light on the era:

When the *Kuwanggung aakpu* was officially recognized under the name *Kungnip kugagwŏn*, it became evident that those with the *Taehan kugagwŏn*, which had been established right after liberation through the agency of Ham Hwajin and Pak Hŏnbong, had been unsuccessful in their efforts to prevent having the name of their organization usurped. Since then, conflicts between the system of national institutions and musicians outside this system have intensified (Song Bang-Song 2007:697).

In view of the historical narrative of the era that often presents a picture of musicians desperate to preserve their cultural heritage, it could have been expected that the *Taehan kugagwŏn* musicians would have been glad to see a national institution for *kugak* finally set up, and would have taken pride in their name creation being chosen for this institution. But not only had the Japanese colonial period just ended, but it was an era of intense ideological struggle between left and right (as well as of material need and individual agendas), so the strife between the two factions had a political dimension at least

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<sup>22</sup> Moon Hyun adds the following as remarkable singers in this category: Chŏng Mari, Kim Nari, An Chŏnga, and Kim Hŭiyŏng (2015: 53).

<sup>23</sup> The institution is therefore generally referred to as the *Taehan kugagwŏn* nowadays.



superficially. Insult was added to injury for the *Taehan kugagwŏn* faction as they had apparently first coined the term *kugak* to replace *minsok ūmak* (folk music), precisely to express their appreciation of folk music which the likes of the *Aakpu* faction looked down upon (Song Bang-Song 2007:699). Hahn Man-young mentions that a proposal upon liberation to merge the *Yiwangjik aakpu* and the *Chosŏn ūmakpu* (Chosŏn Music Bureau), a colonial-era organization that many later *Taehan kugagwŏn* members had previously belonged to, had been rejected by members of the former who saw the latter as pro-Japanese (1990:29). Writers on the subject accordingly come to different conclusions about the institute's significance. Hahn Man-young does not mention the name dispute and paints the *Taehan kugagwŏn* as a dilapidated association that soon faded into oblivion, decaying "[d]uring and after the Korean war" (1990:30), while Song Bang-Song sees it as the predecessor of the present *Han'guk kugak hyŏphoe* (Korean Traditional Music Association). Further, Song sees the *ch'anggŭk* (staged *p'ansori*) organization affiliated to the *Taehan kugagwŏn* as the predecessor of the present *Kungnip ch'anggŭktan* (National Opera Company). Likewise, a recent paper on the *Taehan kugagwŏn* by Kim Min-su (2016) traces the institute's activities through the 1950s.

As far as *chŏngga* singers are concerned, however, the divisions between such factions were never absolute. Yi Pyŏngsŏng's lesser visibility compared to fellow *Aakpu* student Yi Chuhwan is usually interpreted as being the result of his early death; no sources mention pro-Japanese agency on his part, and he proceeded to teach at the National Gugak Center later. Likewise, Yi Chuhwan, though affiliated to the Center, appeared in one of the *Taehan kugagwŏn*'s theatre-related activities in 1946 (Song Bang-Song 2007:700).

## 5.5 The Gugak National Middle and High School

Musical proficiency is best achieved when instruction starts from a young age. In pre-modern Korea, *kagŏk* was a mostly hereditary profession, and training subsequently started from a young

age. The case of *kisaeng* has been discussed above. At the *Yiwangjik aakpu*, students started at age 11, and in post-liberation Korea, the majority of influential musicians likewise trained from when they were children. Today a substantial number of them have passed through the Gugak National Middle and High School. The School has, therefore, become something of a standard entrance into the career path of becoming a *chŏngga* singer.

As discussed above, the *Kugaksa yangsŏngso*, effectively, though after a brief break, the successor of the previous *Yangsŏngso*, the educational arm of the *Yiwangjik aakpu*, was established at the National Gugak Center after the Korean War in 1955, and branched off from the Center in 1972 to become the Gugak National High School (*Kungnip kugak kodŭng hakeyo*) with Sŏng Kyŏngnin as its first director. In terms of location, however, it is more accurate to say that the National Gugak Center branched off, as the High School became the main institution, “housing” the Center until 1973 when the Center moved away (Song Bang-Song 2007:706).

In 1975, the middle school programme was abolished, raising the entrance age and shortening the programme at the *Yangsŏngso* to a three-year high-school curriculum. The middle school programme was added again with the establishment of the Gugak National Middle School (*Kungnip kugak chungbakkyo*) in 1991, but *chŏngga* was available as a major only from the high school level, until it was introduced to the middle school in 2005. The Gugak National Middle and High schools have grown ever since. Their curricula and policies continue to be revised; hence, for example, the high school programme was allowed in 2001 to raise its annual intake from 90 to 150 students divided into five classes. In continuation of the *Yangsŏngso*’s tradition of financial support, entrance fees and tuition fees are supported by the government.<sup>24</sup>

The High and Middle schools have been the foremost institutions in South Korea responsible for the teaching of *chŏngga* to young people ever since, or to put it in the words of Song Bang-Song: “With the completion ceremony for the newly-constructed school building for the middle school on 7 March 2002, the age of the Gugak National High and Middle School is firmly

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<sup>24</sup> Homepage of the Gugak National High School at [gugak.hs.kr/eng/Introduction.htm](http://gugak.hs.kr/eng/Introduction.htm). Elementary and middle schooleducation in Korea is state-funded, but high schooleducation is usually not.

established” (2007:706). Another school also exists, the private Traditional Music Arts School (*Kugak yesul hakeyo*), a more performance-oriented institution hiring “Human Assets [holders of Intangible Cultural Properties] for their particular practical skills more than specialized music teachers” (Hahn Man-young 1990:37). This was founded in 1960 with a focus on folk music, although its teaching included *kagok* as well (Song Bang-Song 2007:707).

Currently eleven major subjects are available at the middle school and fifteen at the high school.<sup>25</sup> While middle school students have to complete the standard Korean middle school curriculum, the ratio of general to specialized subjects is half and half at the High School. In 2017, there were eleven *chǒngga* students (9 female/2 male) at the middle school and nine at the high school (6 female/3 male).<sup>26</sup> *Chǒngga* teaching at the Gugak Middle School is divided between three teachers: Hong Hyōnsu, Min Sumin and Kim Hūsōng. Meanwhile, the Gugak High School has counted on a number of *chǒngga* teachers over the years.<sup>27</sup> Pak Mun-gyu taught from 1978 until Kim Kyōngbae, current intangible property holder for *kagok* took over in 1983, but Kim soon resigned in favour of teaching at the university level. No regular *chǒngga* teacher was employed for some time, and teaching was entrusted to visiting teachers who included Kim Wōlha, the previous intangible property holder for *kagok*, and Yi Chǒnggyu, currently employed at the National Gugak Center. The current regular *chǒngga* teacher, Yi Sūngyun, took over in 1989 or 1990. Some of the more well-known graduates of the Gugak High School’s *chǒngga* programme mentioned on its homepage are intangible cultural property holders for *kagok* Kim Kyōngbae (b.1940) and Kim Yōnggi (b.1958), as well as “Semi-Korean Human Cultural Assets” Yi Tonggyu

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<sup>25</sup> The additional majors at the High School are theory, composition, conducting and acting/directing. The following account of the structure of the *chǒngga* programmes and the mechanisms of student recruitment at the Middle and High School is based on their respective homepages: gugak.ms.kr and gugak.hs.kr.

<sup>26</sup> I discuss and try to explain these gender ratios, comparing them to those in other majors, at the end of the next section on *kugak* in university departments. The overviews of student numbers in the *chǒngga* department differ between the English and the Korean versions of the homepages, but the tendency in the gender ratio is consistent.

<sup>27</sup> Information from Pak Mun-gyu, personal interview at the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture (*Wōlha munhwa chaedan*, 21 August 2015).

for *kagok* (b.1945, the son of Yi Pyöngsöng), with Kim Hosöng (b.1943) and Hwang Kyunam (birthdate unavailable, but likely between 1940-50) for *kasa*.<sup>28</sup>

The High School is allowed an annual intake of up to 150 students, the Middle School of up to 120. The allocation of students is based on quotas and the number of qualified applicants. At the middle school, the specialities are divided into four groups with different quotas for each: instrumental music (90-103 students), vocal music (6-12), percussion (1-5) and dance (10-13). The vocal field comprises *p'ansori*, *minyo* and *chöngga* with between 1-5 students per year in each. The entrance exam consists of an interview and a special skills test – a small performance – which count 20%/80% respectively. In the special skills test, *chöngga* applicants have to select and perform two songs out of four options that are given. The options include no *chöngga*, but two children's songs and two practice songs from a book called *Taemaru*, written by Kim Kisu, which contains vocal exercises notated in the Korean mensural system, *chöngganbo*.

At the High School there are admission quotas not for fields but individual instruments and specialities, with *kayagüm* zither at the top (20-24 students) and *chöngga* among genres at the bottom (2-6 students). These quotas likely reflect the admission policies of universities and ultimately the reality of performers needed in the professional *kugak* world. Unsurprisingly, instruments such as *kayagüm* or *haegüm* fiddle which often appear in orchestras or ensembles, and are used across the entire canon of the *kugak* repertoire, fare much better than genres like *chöngga*, which do not need a great number of performers and are limited to a small canon. Admission is decided on the basis of a score in which previous middle school marks count 40% and a performance skills test 60%. In the High School's special skills test, *chöngga* students have to perform another three songs from the *Taemaru* book and one *p'yöngsijo*.

I was fortunate to personally observe a day of classes at the High School under the guidance of the dynamic *chöngga* teacher Yi Söngyun on 14 November 2014. In the morning, I watched a

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<sup>28</sup> The corresponding section is missing in the Korean version of the homepage, but “Semi-Cultural Asset” must be the translation of a status in the intangible cultural property system termed *chunpoyuja*, Vice-holder for a property. Suh Han-bum writes that the term, along with other designations was abolished after 1994 and replaced by the single term *chönsu kyoyuk chogyo*: Assistant teacher in transmission (2004:293).

group singing class. Around 30 students of different majors were gathered in a typical classroom environment while visiting teacher Yi Yugyŏng struck the starting pitch on a piano. Students sang together, going through a number of exercise songs – the equivalents to études in Western music – and easy folksongs or children’s songs notated in *chŏngganbo*. The class served a purpose similar to that of solfège singing in Western music teaching, namely that of ear training and instilling general musicality, albeit with a focus on ornaments and mode rather than the intuitive apprehension of intervals that solfège training aims for. If we hold that a musical aesthetic finds its primary expression in vocal style, it follows that singing ornaments is a useful way of laying the basis for their proper execution on an instrument later. The style of vocal delivery and the question of the differences observed in this regard between *chŏngga* and folk genres were of accordingly little consequence. Later, I witnessed a *chŏngga* class for three students, held by teacher Yi Sŏngyun in a small music room. Students and teacher sat on flat pillows on the floor, with teacher Yi in front; students and teacher sang together *Kirŏgi*, a *yŏch’ang chirŭm* sijo of unknown authorship. Students and teacher had their scores in front of them while they performed *muriŭp changdan* – beating the rhythmic cycles on their knees – including particular gestures imitating the melodic contour of *sigimsae* ornaments. Small sections were repeated, and whenever teacher Yi thought the rendering of *sigimsae* needed improvement, she emphasized in her singing and hand gestures the part that needed mending. If it was not for the scores, it might well have been that I was observing what *chŏngga* teaching in Chosŏn times looked like. The teacher-student relationship seemed cordial and familial, contrasting harshly the anecdotal evidence that often surfaces with regard to Western music teaching of young students in Korea; more than one Korean friend of mine dreaded his/her obligatory piano classes because of Korean piano teachers’ purported habit of hitting students’ hands for each wrong note, and Western vocal training has been exposed by Nicholas Harkness (2014). The familial atmosphere in the *chŏngga* class appeared natural and genuine, as much as it could have owed partly to my own presence. Partly, this appeared to be a consequence of teacher Yi’s kind personality, but mostly it seemed to

spring from the music itself. Much like in my own *sijo* classes with teacher Moon Hyun, *chŏngga* practice even today imbues any environment with a peaceful, gentle and meditative mood that makes harsh teaching methods for *chŏngga* hard to imagine – it is as if the Confucian literati’s dream of a world of courtesy materializes as soon as *chŏngga* is sounding. Or, maybe as the Gugak High School’s homepage claims, *chŏngga* “pacifies people, softens their hardened hearts, and leaves them feeling relaxed”.

As I clarified in Chapter 4, institutions such as the Gugak High School and *kugak* university departments follow the aesthetic vision of the *chŏngga* canon as transmitted by Ha Kyuil in general terms, although to what degree precisely a student should emulate his teacher or stick to a particular stylistic version is a more complex question that has been discussed there. Ninety per cent of the Gugak High School’s graduates go on to study in *kugak* university departments, with 20% entering Seoul National University. If we calculate that the annual intake at the High School is of 150 students, this would make for a whopping 30 High School students admitted to Seoul National University’s *kugak* department every year.<sup>29</sup>

As an epilogue to this discussion, it is worth adding a brief discussion of *chŏngga* in non-specialist schools in Korea. In 1980, Hahn Man-young wrote:

Korean music had been virtually ignored by schools until the 1960s. Even in the 1970s, only 8% of primary textbooks and 30% of middle and high school textbooks offered any introduction to, or history of, Korean music. This continued until the revision of middle and high school textbooks in 1979. Korean music was then allotted 50% of music class time, but this percentage was to include recently composed lyric songs (again known as *kagok*, but a form distant from the court tradition). The subject is now firmly established as part of the school curriculum and Western music students at every major Korean university take introductory courses in it. However, tertiary music teachers tend to know little about Korean music, so their courses in the subject are not particularly successful (quotationd from the English translation, 1990:38).

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<sup>29</sup> A possible problematic of artistic inbreeding is discussed in the following section on *kugak* in universities.

A conference I audited at the Academy of Korean Studies in 2014, titled “The Analysis and Comparison of Traditional Music in the Music Textbooks of Korea, China and Japan”, discussed this topic, namely the teaching of Korean and other countries’ traditions in music classes at school. One of the conclusions was that the last point mentioned by Hahn Man-young was still a problem.<sup>30</sup> Korean school curricula have been amended a total of seven times since 1945, with the last revisions taking place in relatively quick succession in 2007 and 2009. In the area of music, revisions have repeatedly shown increased *kugak* teaching. But, they have also reflected policy decisions in more complex ways that defy easy summarization. Sijo music is currently introduced for the first time in elementary school, typically in the fifth or sixth grade of study.<sup>31</sup> Illustrations 5.2 and 5.3 (in the appendix) show the respective lessons in two Korean sixth-year elementary school music textbooks. While the slightly more academic textbook (Cho Hyoim 2010:52-3) features the sijo *T’aesami* in *chǒngganbo*, including explanations on knee *changdan*, the other one (Yang Chongmo 2012:48-9) teaches the sijo *Tongch’angi*, based on a notation style called *karaksŏn akpo* (melodic line notation) reminiscent of Chong Kyŏngt’ae’s earlier graphic notations for amateur sijo singers.

A paper by Moon Hyun (1999) analyses the treatment of *chǒngga* in 20 different textbooks, criticizing misrepresentations and giving suggestions, but since most of the textbooks surveyed are no longer used, his paper is today slightly outdated. It would, though, be interesting to see whether Moon’s recommendations were followed up on in subsequent textbooks. For the moment, we can conclude that Korean students are nowadays brought into first contact with sung sijo from elementary school onwards and should, accordingly, theoretically have basic sijo literacy.

## 5.6 *Kugak* in universities

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<sup>30</sup> *Han, chung, il, ŭmak kyogwasŏ ŭi chǒnt’ong ŭmak punsŏk mit pigyo*, 29 August 2014. Cheynne Gibbs-Singh’s PhD research (2017) discusses a similar problematic with regard to British secondary schools.

<sup>31</sup> Sung Ki-Ryun (personal communication at the Academy of Korean Studies, 15 October 2014, and Sung Ki-Ryun 2014). For a recent study of how the music education-related conclusions of the latest revision round in 2009 are applied in newer textbooks see Kim Minha 2015.

As the main institutions responsible for the instruction of professional *chŏngga* singers nowadays we can cite *kugak* departments at several universities in Korea. While university courses on Korean music were offered for the first time in 1928 at what is now Ewha Women's University, "Korean music was not recognized as an academic subject until after the Korean War" (Howard 2002b:990), so offerings at places such as Ewha's predecessor were just single courses rather than being part of a greater programme and did not last long. Courses were again set up and offered after liberation. One attempt to establish a *kugak* programme was made in 1954 at Töksŏng Women's University, but it was soon abandoned due to "public apathy and a lack of experience amongst staff" (Hahn Man-young 1990:27). The establishment of the *kugak* department at Seoul National University in 1959 that has prevailed until the present can therefore be seen as the beginning of *kugak* instruction at the tertiary level. With the seminal *kugak* scholars Lee Hye-ku (1908-2010) and Chang Sa-Hun (1916-1991) among its faculty, it started out with five instrumental majors and a theory major (Song Bang-Song 2007:710). Next to Seoul National University, the only three universities to feature *kugak* departments before the 1980s that have lasted until the present are the private Hanyang University (from 1972 onwards), Ewha Women's University (1974) and Chugye University for the Arts (1974). Other universities soon developed programmes, though, and by the mid-1980s more than 10 *kugak* departments at different universities existed (Hahn 1990:38). Howard lists further departments at Yeungnam University (from 1982 onwards), Chonnam National University (1982), Kyungpook National University (1982), Chung-Ang University (1984), and Dankook University (1984), and adds that by 2002 more than 25 universities offered degree courses in *kugak* (2002b:990). Besides musical performance and composition, research on *kugak* (as Korean musicology) has also developed in *kugak* departments.

Although university-level *kugak* teaching is mentioned in many sources, information on its structure is scarce even on university homepages, so most of my information here comes from an interview with Pak Mun-gyu, a long-time lecturer at Seoul National University's *kugak*



department, conducted on 21 August 2015 at the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture. I was most concerned with discussing the structure of *chŏngga* teaching at Seoul National. It is worth mentioning that Seoul National is widely recognized as Korea's foremost and most prestigious university, followed by Yonsei University and Korea University; both these latter universities lack music departments, so they do not enter my discussion here. Although outstanding *kugak* musicians can rise anywhere, Seoul National University's *kugak* department was not only the first of its kind, but also an example that other universities have followed and tried to emulate in their adoption of *kugak* as an academic field, largely modelling their curricula on that of Seoul National University (Song Bang-Song 2007:710). This, of course, may reflect the fact that professors elsewhere have tended to train first at Seoul National. So while Pak Mun-gyu's account of *chŏngga* teaching at Seoul National University may not be representative of all *kugak* departments in Korea, it is the most relevant example and sets the standard that other departments aspire to.

Pak Mun-gyu [Pak Mun'gyu] (b.1949) is a *kagok* singer, *p'iri* oboe player and *kugak* educator who learned his *chŏngga* mostly from Yi Chuhwan. He entered the *Kugaksa yangsŏngso* in 1963, majoring in *p'iri*, and graduated in 1969 after which he studied at Seoul National University for eight years. Afterwards, he spent a year at the National Gugak Center, where music director Kim Kisu suggested he switch from his original major in *p'iri* to teaching *kagok*, because Pak had exhibited a predilection for singing and *changgo* playing. The suggestion resonated with Pak's own wish to be an educator, and was later reflected in his decision to return to university to study *kugak* education. In 1978, Pak started teaching *chŏngga* at the Gugak National High School for five years where Kim Pyŏngo, currently employed at the National Gugak Center, was among his first students. After five years, Pak switched to *p'iri* teaching while Kim Kyŏngbae took over the *chŏngga* students. Pak stayed at the High School until 2002, and since 2003 he has taught *chŏngga*, *changgo* and ensemble practice at the *kugak* departments in a number of universities including Dankook University, Cheongju University, Chugye University of Arts, and, of course, Seoul National University.

The *chŏngga* major at Seoul National was introduced in 1984 with Hong Ch'angnam, currently employed at the National Gugak Center, as the first student; it includes *kagok*, *kasa*, *sijo* and *sich'ang*, but excludes *chapka* – which are considered to belong to the *minyo* folksong repertoire, despite the marked similarities of parts of the *chapka* repertoire to *kasa*. At Seoul National, however, *minyo* is not available as a major of its own. The *chŏngga* major is set up largely in the same way as instrumental majors, so that all performance students follow the same curriculum, diverging only with regard to their individual instrument or, in this case, singing classes. Just like the instrumental *kugak* programmes, the structure of the *chŏngga* major therefore includes a number of general compulsory subjects such as English and Korean Literature, as well as compulsory subjects in *kugak*, such as courses in *kugak* theory and history. *Chŏngga* students are not required to learn other vocal genres at Seoul National, unlike at the *kugak* department of Chugye University of the Arts where students majoring in *chŏngga* are required to learn all vocal *kugak* genres, including *p'ansori*, a matter which may seem surprising given the very different vocal delivery.

*Chŏngga* appears to be rather sidelined in comparison to instrumental majors, for reasons that I discuss below. At the time of my interview with Pak, there were three *chŏngga* students studying in Seoul National's *kugak* department, two female and one male, corresponding to the ratio I had discovered at the Gugak High School. Pak recalled that more than 10 female and fewer male students had graduated since the beginning of *chŏngga* teaching at Seoul National. If he remembered correctly, this would make *chŏngga* a rather sparsely represented major, and suggest that there are years without any intake of *chŏngga* students at all.<sup>32</sup> *Chŏngga* classes are available to students from other majors as well, and Pak explained that in the previous year he had taught winter classes – one-month courses after the end of the academic semester – in *chŏngga* to about 20 students from other majors such as *kayagŭm* zither or *p'iri* oboe who were interested in *chŏngga*

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<sup>32</sup> The alternate explanation that *chŏngga* students have frequently discontinued their studies before graduation seems less likely.

beyond the requirements of their programme. Yet, Pak told me that he considers such short courses ineffective and no longer wishes to teach them.

Among the eight *kugak* professors at Seoul National University, five specialize in performance, and one each in composition, ethnomusicology and theory. No professor at Seoul National University specializes in *chŏnggak*, or any vocal major; all those who specialize in performance are associated with a particular instrument, but it is likely that most of the professors in the *kugak* department are able to sing *chŏngga*. At least two have authored publications on *chŏngga*. Kim Ujin – Yi Chuhwan’s son-in-law – and recent professor emeritus Hwang JunYon. *Chŏngga* teaching at Seoul National is therefore entrusted to lecturers from outside like Pak Mun-gyu – in Pak’s case with additional educational credentials – who nevertheless do not hold formal posts at the university. For reasons of age, Pak no longer teaches *yŏch’ang kagok*, the *kagok* repertoire for female voice, as he has difficulty in hitting notes in the required high register. Moreover, he considers doing so unnecessary, opining that in *chŏngga* men should teach male repertoires and women should teach female repertoires. Currently, the female *chŏngga* lecturer at Seoul National is *kagok* intangible property holder Kim Yŏnggi (b.1958). *Chŏngga* likely has fewer lecturers than those for instrumental majors; when I learned the *kŏmun’go* for two semesters during an earlier stay as an exchange student at Seoul National University in 2010-2011, I had a different teacher each semester, first Kim JoonYoung and later Yi Pangsil, from the National Gugak Center’s Contemporary Gugak Orchestra and Court Music Orchestra, respectively. Some of the students who have graduated from Seoul National University’s *chŏngga* major course and become active as *chŏngga* singers are Pak Minhŭi, Yi Yugyŏng,<sup>33</sup> Kim Nari, Yi Arŭm, An Chŏnga and Kim Sihyŏn.

At Seoul National University, a *kugak* master’s programme was introduced in 1963, but originally it was limited to theory majors (Song Bang-Song 2007:711). The first doctoral programme in *kugak* was established by Lee Hye-ku at the Academy of Korean Studies in 1982 (Howard 2002b:990). At Seoul National, master’s and doctoral degree programmes for *kugak*

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<sup>33</sup> Yi Yugyŏng at the time worked as a visiting teacher at the Gugak National High School and taught the group class that I witnessed during my visit to the School described above.

instrumental majors were introduced in 1983 and 2004 respectively.<sup>34</sup> The teaching method used in *chŏngga* classes at Seoul National is the same as at the Gugak High School, but requires and expects a higher level of ability. Pak's explanations, however, made it clear that *chŏngga* group classes in which several students are taught simultaneously, like the one that I witnessed at the Gugak High School, are dropped in university in favour of individual lessons. Pak explained that students at Seoul National already know the entire repertoire when starting their course, and consequently work on the finer stylistic details of their performing, namely *sigimsae* ornamentation and the proper interpretation of the emotions associated with each piece. However, he pointed out that other universities at times differ in this respect, so that students may learn pieces just for exams and later forget them. As in all contemporary *kugak* institutions, the use of scores is the norm, which Kim Yŏnggi relates to having an original purpose of greater efficiency than rote learning in an educational environment.<sup>35</sup>

Seoul National University's *kugak* department features regular concerts by students. Some of these are organized on a department level, and advertised and attended by bigger audiences, while some, like graduation recitals, are part of the students' curriculum and held in an obscure semi-public atmosphere. Song Bang-Song writes: "From the second year of their studies, students took turns to appear in compulsory recitals and present their major-related performance abilities in front of the whole school. Graduation recitals were held as in the Western music department, but had to include one *chŏngga* piece, *sanjo* [an instrumental solo piece from the folk music canon] or *sinawi* [an ensemble piece of shamanic origin from the folk music canon], as well as a new composition in their programme. Only those among the *kugak* theory students who majored in composition had their composition performed by others, but all theory students needed to hand in a thesis" (2007:710-11). In my experience, however, the regular recitals are attended by the corresponding faculty and a number of friends at best, while graduation recitals might

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<sup>34</sup> According to the historical timeline given on Seoul National University's homepage. URL: [http://music.snu.ac.kr/school\\_history](http://music.snu.ac.kr/school_history) (accessed March 10, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Personal communication at her *Kagok* Transmission Centre (*Kagok chŏnsugwan*) in Seoul (26 August 2015).

additionally draw students in the same major, as well as the composer of the new composition and his/her friends.

While in some countries like Germany musicology departments are incorporated in universities while performance and composition are taught at conservatoires but never universities, Korean music departments draw separations between *kugak* performance and musicology on one side and Western music performance and musicology on the other. Korean-style musicology has a focus on historical musicology and music analysis, retaining a methodology introduced by Lee Hye-ku that has changed little over the decades but has been applied to a wider repertoire in recent times, although it was conceived of with *aak* and *chŏngak* in mind (Howard 2016:458). Howard describes the five main components of this methodology as the translation and annotation of historical texts, the notation of court music, comparison of historical scores (and, at times, recordings) to determine origins, developments and change, and theoretical discussions of musical parameters and aesthetics (2002a:10-2). It is my contention that Korean musicology in recent years has diversified more than this suggests, so there is a bulk of research that is quite similar to historical musicology in the West and does not delve into an analysis of musical minutiae, but instead discusses the historical circumstances of transmission and so on. An example of a recent Seoul National University doctoral thesis in the field of *chŏngga* is the aforementioned work about the transmission of *kagok* at two *kwŏnbŏn* by Kim Minjŏng.<sup>36</sup> This consists of three parts which span the components of historical research in describing teaching genealogies of the singers under discussion and the historical background of the *kwŏnbŏn*; music analysis, specifically a stylistic comparison of both singers' recordings of *kagok* pieces; and aesthetics in a discussion, based on the previous musical analysis, of how certain aesthetic principles were realized by each of the singers.

In 1980, Hahn Man-young wrote that “[T]he annual concerts mounted at Seoul National University since 1961 are the most authentic” besides concerts by the National Gugak Center or

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<sup>36</sup> *Hansŏng kwŏnbŏn'gwa Chosŏn kwŏnbŏn ūi yŏch'ang kagok chŏnsŭng – Ch'oe Chŏnghŭiwa Chi Kŭmjŏng ūl chungsimŭro* (2015).

the City Traditional Music Orchestra (Seoul *sirip kwanhyŏn aktan*) (in English translation, 1990:41). It is hard to ascertain whether such a simplistic ranking can be upheld nowadays. Surely the best performances are held where the best students learn from the best performers, and this should be expected to be at the universities with the greatest renown. General problems of *kugak* research are laid out in an article by Lee Byong Won (2000). Some of the common hindrances mentioned are a lack of integration of the research of Western and Korean scholars, as well as of Korean scholars from different fields. Relevant here are two points: a negative attitude towards “irregular students”, and the prevalence of academic inbreeding, two sides of the same coin, with “irregular students” meaning students who have studied in different fields along their academic career route, and who have later been commonly discriminated against in hiring decisions. Lee Byong Won writes that “the rate of the inbred faculty is 94.7% at Seoul National University”, which at the time he was writing about led to a law limiting the rate to no more than two-thirds (2000:47). In performance majors at the university level, the problem takes the form of singers’ performances suffering from a tendency to emulate the teacher. Moreover, in my experience, performance students will hardly be familiar with concepts or ideas unless they are endorsed by the faculty at their home university. Public interest in *kugak* is low, so circular networks as laid out by Howard in various publications prevail, turning the *kugak* world into a closed, self-contained, and to a certain degree, self-serving system: “[S]tudents form the core audiences for recitals by their teachers [...]; graduates populate ensembles and orchestras [...]; soloists, ensembles and orchestras commission composers who work in university *kugak* programmes; musicologists [...] define *kugak* parameters for composers and performers [...] and determine grant distribution through their participation on funding and policy bodies” (2016:460; see also 2011). Based on Pak Mun-gyu’s account, a “regular” *chŏngga* student at Seoul National University could go through an undergraduate, a master’s and doctoral programme in the department without ever learning *chŏngga* from more than one singer, which may result in an impoverished artistic outlook. A look at the profiles of *chŏngga* singers employed at the National Gugak Center, however, reveals that

the politics behind hiring practices must have changed in the last decades, as some of the singers have profiles that would have counted as “irregular” in the past: only three of the seven singers are Seoul National University graduates, three have studied at different universities throughout their academic careers, three hold only undergraduate degrees, two have studied up to the master degree level, and two hold doctorates. All in all, the singers at the Center, including the satellite Center in Busan, hold degrees from Seoul National University (3), Chugye University of the Arts (3), Hanyang University (2), Ewha Women’s University (1), Yong In University (1), Sungkyunkwan University (1), the Academy of Korean Studies (1) and Pusan National University (1).

Difficulties in finding employment as a university graduate are considerable in contemporary South Korea. Although the area of *kugak* performance is no exception, some of my interviewees particularly emphasized *chŏngga* as one of the hardest fields to find employment in; accordingly many of its graduates resort to other jobs. Pak Mun-gyu explained that many, especially male, *chŏngga* students have gone on to become *changgo* drum accompanists, for example in *aktan* – *kugak* orchestras, when they could not find employment as singers, with the low number of *chŏngga*-related jobs owed to the fact that many *aktan* do not play *chŏngak* at all. In an interview on 24 August 2015 at the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture, Yeh Chan-kun pointed out that chances for *sijo*’s survival were low unless there was a living to be made from singing it. *Chŏngga* singers were facing a particularly difficult situation since only a few *chŏngga* singers are employed at the National Gugak Center compared to other fields, and he argued that out of all *kugak* genres, it was *chŏngga* that was the hardest to find employment in, harder even than ritual *aak* or *myŏng* traditional dance, since, typically, a great number of *aak* musicians and dancers is needed at the National Gugak Center and in the various *aktan*. Both at the Gugak National Middle and High School and at Seoul National University, female *chŏngga* students currently outnumber male students in a ratio of at least 2:1, and Pak’s comments indicate that this has long been the trend. At the National Gugak Center, the employment of three female and four male singers does not

reflect this ratio, although female singer Yi Chuna holds a special status as both an *akchang* (ensemble leader) at the Center, and a *kasa chogyo* (an assistant teacher in transmission of *kasa* within the intangible property system), a post that was designed to precede and lead to property holder status (Yang Jongsung 2003). The higher ratio of female students reflects a general trend in *kugak* learning, in which 82% of the Gugak High School's graduates are female. The trend is even more pronounced in other fields of *kugak*, especially *kayagŭm* (zither), *haegŭm* (fiddle) and *muyong* (traditional dance), which are practically devoid of male students, but even students of the *kŏmun'go* zither are in their majority female today, whereas it was in the past considered an instrument solely for men. The only field at the Middle and High School with consistently more male than female students is percussion. While *kugak* is clearly more popular among school-age girls than boys, this may either reflect the attitude of contemporary Korean society which views *kugak* as better suited to girls than boys, or the interest of children themselves. A Korean friend suggested society viewed something like playing the *kayagŭm* or *haegŭm* as “pretty”, something a girl would want to engage in, much like ballet. Howard suggests that boys might be choosing more career-oriented paths than girls who in Korea still often give up work upon marriage and whose university education is therefore seen by parents as a way to marry up in society (personal communication, March 2017). In the case of *chŏngga* there may be additional misgivings on the part of the students' parents at the time of their enrolment as *chŏngga* students. In these, *chŏngga* might be seen as matching a girl better, or a girl is seen as more likely to succeed in the area. Since in most cases the choice is made before the onset of puberty and the vocal change in boys, there may also be greater uncertainty in the case of boys that their voice will ultimately hold up to the requirements of *chŏngga* singing.



## Chapter 6. Sijo preservation, practice and regional styles

### Introduction

This chapter discusses contemporary sijo and *chŏngga* practice in the context of preservation efforts in the form of both the Korean preservation system at the national level, and the related system introduced later that operates at the local level. It will include a discussion of preservation efforts in Korea in general and the criticism levelled at the system, a section on the system's repercussions or lack thereof in the practice of *chŏngga* and sijo, and finally a discussion of regional sijo styles and their preservation. The last section can in some parts be seen as complementing the genealogy of *chŏngga* covered above as regards specifically sijo at the regional level.

### 6.1 The Korean Preservation System

The Korean Law for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage dates from 1962 (*Munhwajae pobobŏp*) and has already been mentioned in Chapter 4 in connection to the concept of *wŏnhyŏng*, the archetype form, describing how the intangible cultural property system has favoured versions in the style of the Ha Kyuil lineage over others, creating - in the terms of the bottleneck metaphor – “selective pressure” on artistic diversity. I concluded that the system has in a limited number of cases allowed alternative *chŏngga* styles to have a place. Although this is to be expected, given the natural dynamic of creative change in a musical tradition, it is surprising in view of the strict rules of the bureau that oversees the system.

In order to properly appreciate the Korean property system, it has to be put into the perspective of preservation as a general modern-day concern in music and performance culture throughout the world, as well as in respect to national and international initiatives aiming at this. The main argument that is typically advanced in justification of the need for preservation

initiatives is the current globalized landscape in which minority cultural expressions such as music or language face a threat of extinction due to the homogenizing agency of global economic flows and the Darwinist nature of the global capitalist marketplace, in which a substantial number of musical traditions would simply disappear without preservation initiatives. Preservation initiatives can be divided into national systems, such as Korea's, and international ones – such as UNESCO's system for the safeguarding of 'Human Treasures' and 'Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage'. UNESCO's system is both derived from previously existing national initiatives, and at the same time stimulates such systems in nations. This is UNESCO's statement on intangible cultural heritage:

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.<sup>1</sup>

The similarities between Korea's system and that of UNESCO are no coincidence: Korea has played an important role in many of UNESCO's initiatives and sponsored a conference on the topic in 1996 (Howard 2006b:16). UNESCO has harboured ambitions for a global system for the preservation of intangible heritage since 1982, although discussions date back further. The year 1993 saw the issuing of guidelines for the realization of a policy of 'living human treasures', followed by a first round of 19 nominations of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" in 2001, including *Chongmyo cheryeak*, the music to the Korean Rite for Royal

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002> (accessed 16 January 2012).

Ancestors. From the outset, it has to be conceded that most cultural preservation campaigns play out as a fundamental intervention into a cultural system, and examples from around the world abound where this has led to great changes in musical cultures, in the musical structures themselves, performance practice, performance context and repertory, as well as in shifting prestige and power relations. Yet, such change can be shaped according to indigenous sensitivities through projects which promote ‘sustainable preservation’, an example of which is the “Sustainable Futures” project (2009-2013) headed by Huib Schippers at Griffith University, Queensland.

Any system which seeks to preserve music relies on some notion of authenticity. The problems with upholding claims of authenticity can most readily be seen in the example of historical performance practice in Western classical music, where a consensus seems to have been reached that authenticity is a chimera, for there is always a degree of interpretation involved. Preservation initiatives have accordingly undergone a number of changes. While a notion of authenticity is still critical in retaining a link to what is essential in a given tradition, a shift can be observed from tangible heritage-based approaches of documentation and archiving towards perpetuation of a genre’s transmission processes. Sustainable preservation denotes a focus on creativity and re-creation of musical tradition. Therefore, ethnomusicologists have, while mostly embracing the idea of preservation and endorsing its necessity, come to the conclusion that change is inherent in performance practice and as such altogether natural. Attempts at preservation acknowledge this and shift the focus of the problem to the question of the nature of changes that occur. The tendency is to advocate that musical change in a tradition occur on the terms of those within it, to find ways in which musical traditions can be encouraged to preserve their own music in a dynamic and self-sustainable way, which puts them in control of how changes play out. This was the express objective of the Sustainable Futures project, which worked on what those involved call a toolkit, or a set of methods which are supposed to be applicable to any culture around the globe and endow them with the agency to support and

control the musical change within their tradition on their own terms. It remains to be seen if a universal method applicable to a wide range of traditions is indeed a possibility, or if responses to the problems of preservation have to be culture-specific, taking into account the unique situations of each tradition.

Since its promulgation in 1962, the Korean intangible property system has been the subject of criticism. Such criticism concerns inadequacies in the strategy and mechanisms of the system, but also the system's conception and effects themselves. The main three aspects that have come under scrutiny are:

1. Problems surrounding nominations.
2. The problem of “museification”
3. The law and its rigidity as a power tool

The nomination process and the related decisions of what is currently called the Heritage Policy Bureau (*Munhwajae ch'ŏng*) on which genres should be nominated and who should be appointed as the holder have in the past been the main cause of strife. What if there is no good performer for a genre worth preserving? What if there are several? In *chŏngga*, too, there are cases of notable singers being passed over just because there was an abundance of truly great singers in one generation. Besides, it is in the nature of the system that many more genres exist – even if only in local variants – than can be protected within the scope of the system and the funding available. This has caused conflicts mostly for folk genres since their assessment lies at the intersection of the disciplines of musicology and folklore studies. Howard describes how musicologists favoured the nomination of popular folksongs polished by professional singers, whereas folklorists saw the local folksongs they had collected in their fieldwork and which were sung by village communities for different occasions and activities as the “real folksongs” (2006b:35). One of the effects of nomination can be the streamlining of similar genres, as has happened in the staging of shaman rituals in Korea which used to exist in great regional variety: As one type is recognized as the “official version”, practitioners have tended to assimilate regional variants or even to discontinue

them in favour of the greater prestige that comes with performing the “officially recognized” version.

The problem of museification especially concerns folk arts. While most Korean folk arts are inextricably bound to pre-modern community life, preservation has entailed a change in performance context, so previously spiritual practices have taken on a new life as staged versions, bringing about adjustments in their practice: In the performance of the official version of the Chindo island shaman ritual, as Howard points out (2006b), parts which had been important in a ritual setting were dropped in favour of other parts considered to have greater entertainment value in the new performance context of an urban stage. In a similar vein, Yang Jongsung has asked if a preserved version of folk can “continue to be a communicative process”. This touches on the problem of preservation tending to encourage rigid and fixed forms, which may violate the very characteristics of a folk genre. Yang Jongsung gives as an example *t'alchum* mask dance, which in its original function served a purpose of social and political commentary on contemporary issues, yet, when a master student within the preservation system started improvising text in a performance, much as would have been common practice in the genre's past, the practice was vehemently discouraged as property holders have the obligation of performing pieces in their preserved form (2003:82). The government's absolute control over Korea's musical culture, at least as concerns *kugak*, and the political instrumentalization it allows for, are evident: with its official version of Korean tradition, history and identity, the government – typically through the National Gugak Center – exercises a virtual monopoly on the meaning of *kugak* genres.

Ultimately, the system's bureaucratic rigidity can undermine the claim to authenticity entailed in the concept of *wŏnhyŏng*, as happened, returning to folklore, in the case of Kangnyŏng mask dance (Property No.34, 1970), a performance art from an area that today belongs to North Korea, which was reconstructed based on the vague testimony of three informants (Yang Jongsung 2003:57-9). According to Yang, this reconstruction procedure testified to the “almost arbitrary”

character of *wŏnhyŏng*; interestingly, new documentation showed up in the form of photos from a 1938 performance of the mask dance that contradicted the version sanctioned in the property system, as well as in the form of additional informants who remembered the dance differently, but no changes to the official version were conceded (2003:80-2). On a similar note, problems also arise from implications of personal benefit which result from the preservation system's economic support for holders of cultural properties who may act upon a wide range of personal motivations. An example of this is Howard's chapter on 'Authority and Authenticity' (in *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2012) which considers the Korean Rite to the Royal Ancestors (*Chongmyo cherye*). His conclusions can be summarized by saying that in this case evidence arose that a number of players who held personal stakes in the preservation system, preserved a version of the dance that displayed considerable differences from what was prescribed in a lot of extant sources. Scholars who submitted the applications for prospective items to be preserved have not always been impartial, but often had their own personal agendas. As a first generation of *kugak* scholars, many of whom were involved in the documentation behind property nominations, is passing away, increasingly, the case is being made that the original documentation that appointment of a genre was based on is faulty.

Academic scrutiny of Korea's intangible property system (Yang Jongsung 2003, Howard 2006b, 2011, 2012), then, has come to ambivalent conclusions. The more or less patent consensus is that for all its faults and problems, many forms of traditional performance art would have disappeared without the support structure that it offers; Moon Hyun told me that he considers this would likely have been *chŏngga*'s fate without the property system (personal communication 2015). Yang Jongsung welcomes the great academic interest in traditional music and the extensive fieldwork on folk genres which the nomination process within the framework of the system has stimulated (2003:108). Howard has assessed the system's success through a survey. Although the political instrumentalization of *kugak* was criticized at times, the consensus

was that the preservation of tradition is important. Howard summarizes the system's success as follows:

[...T]he “historical nation” (to use Hobsbawm’s term) is well established, reflecting, regardless of its reality, a collective cultural heritage that has been promoted, perhaps engineered, by the preservation system (Howard 2006b: 46).

As concerns the musical practice and the popularity of *kugak*, Howard concludes that despite *kugak*'s high social prestige and its countrywide presence in universities and institutions, circular modes of exchange prevail with regard to the groups of people who actively participate in this musical scene (Howard 2011:195-8, also 2016). It is apparent that greater awareness and visibility of *kugak* do not equal greater popularity.

## 6.2 Sijo, preservation and contemporary *chǒngga* practice

The law and the system mark an intersection and a turning point in the destiny of *kugak* – the biggest since the Japanese annexation. In the present context this poses the question to what degree the introduction of the system had an effect on sijo practice. Sijo is not an important cultural property at the national level. I believed sijo was a cultural property even at the time of my PhD application, due to a lapse in a publication by the National Gugak Center: “*Sijo* was made a national intangible treasure in 1968” (Um Hae-kyung 2007:44). The fact that even a date is given makes it more baffling, and I cannot find any other explanation than that it is a mix-up with *kagok* (appointed in the years 1968 for male *kagok* and 1972 for female *kagok*). To be sure, sijo is not an important intangible cultural property and likely never will be, to the chagrin of Moon Hyun who fears that *kyǒngje* sijo will be sidelined by *sǒgamje* sijo (which is discussed in more detail in the last section):

This is how in the present *kyǒngje* sijo is transmitted, along with *kagok* and *kasa*, in performance organizations of *kugak* professionals such as the National Gugak Center, and to students majoring in

*chōngga* in university *kugak* departments all over the country. But while *kagok* and *kasa* are presently appointed as Important Intangible Cultural Properties No.30 and No.41, *kyōngje* sijo is presently not only not an Important Intangible Cultural Property, but it has not even earned the distinction as a Regional Intangible Cultural Property for the Seoul region. Yet, in the current situation, the authentic *kyōngje* sijo school, too, is becoming influenced by *sōgamje* sijo and slowly losing its edge, so it must be appointed immediately (2015:36).

Moon's two arguments are that 1) sijo holds a place similar to *kagok* and *kasa* everywhere except in the preservation system, 2) *kyōngje* sijo is under threat of being bastardized through the influence of *sōgamje*. Yet, it is precisely the first of these claims that undermines the second: with *kyōngje* sijo being taught in *kugak* institutions all over the country, *kyōngje* sijo should be secure, unless there is a fundamental problem with its teaching. I have no evidence that sijo singers in *kugak* institutions, with the exception of sijo specialists like Moon Hyun, would see occasion to learn *sōgamje*, so in that realm it is hard to see where the threat to *kyōngje* sijo could come from. Moon's first argument is more convincing, and to his credit it has to be admitted that it is not easy to see why sijo is not a national property, since sijo's claim to a place within Korea's cultural heritage is indistinguishable from *kasa* and similar to *kagok*. As detailed in Chapter 4, able sijo singers abounded in post-liberation Korea. We can speculate that both Yi Yang-gyo and Chōng Kyōngt'ae might have been appointed as sijo, rather than *kasa* holders, if sijo had been made a cultural property, not because they are not great *kasa* singers, but because they were first and foremost sijo singers, among the figureheads of sung sijo in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I duly asked my teachers why sijo had not been appointed. Pak Mun-gyu opined that the regional variants of sijo were the problem, saying that regional sijo styles coincide with dialects and that therefore sijo could not have been made a national property, but that regional properties had instead been created (personal communication 2015). Of course, the regional properties came only after a change in the Preservation Law in 1987, as Keith Howard pointed out to me (personal communication 2016). Pak's answer still hints at the problem being one of bureaucracy, of sijo being too extensive a genre to be easily documented and subsumed into a property



classification. Indeed, *sijo*, unlike *kagok* and *kasa*, is not properly canonized, and the *sijo* repertoires of different *chōngga* singers are vastly different. A number of poetry collections record *kasa* other than the twelve canonized later, or mix them with pieces considered as *chapka* nowadays, which shows that the canon of the twelve *kasa* was fixed somewhat arbitrarily when it was first established in the 1940s (Jeon Ji-young 2004), but today these twelve nevertheless constitute a clear-cut canon. A similar observation can be made about the broader, but still manageable number of individual pieces in the *kagok* canon. In comparison, there is a vast repertoire of *sijo* variants: around twelve in *kyōngje* *sijo* alone, with variants here meaning *sijo* with differing characteristics of mode, singing technique, text style or *changdan*. A *sijo* resulting from the replacement of *sijo* text through another of the same literary type is also considered a different *sijo*, which makes the *sijo* repertoire endless, although singers usually fall back on *sijo* texts already set to music and transmitted as a separate song. Moon Hyun writes the following about the practice of exchanging texts in *sijo*:

Unlike *kagok* which is sung with *kagok* texts, *sijo* has the advantage that one and the same melody type can be sung with a range of different *sijo* texts (2015:60).<sup>2</sup>

In a footnote on the same page, he adds:

Among the sung *sijo* variants, *p'yōng sijo*, *chirūm sijo* etc. can be sung substituting *tanhyōng sijo*<sup>3</sup> texts with around 45 syllables in almost 100% of the cases. *Sasōl sijo*, meanwhile, with their syllable count of mostly around 90-160 syllables exhibit big divergences and therefore cannot be substituted while maintaining exactly the same melody. Apart from these, *ujo chirūm sijo* can be sung only to *hansi* in the form of the seven-syllable *yulsi*;<sup>4</sup> in the case of *sasōl chirūm sijo*, a *sijo* text with a different number of syllables necessitates changes in the melody and even the *changdan* (2015:60).

<sup>2</sup> The distinction is explained in Chapter 2.1; *kagok* and *sijo* texts are the same thing, but are distinguished here by their use.

<sup>3</sup> Short-form *sijo* (see Chapter 1.2); the standard literary *sijo* form, also known as *p'yōng sijo* in the literature realm.

<sup>4</sup> A type of Chinese Tang-style regulated verse with a number of rules that the poet has to consider.

In *kagok*, meanwhile, the matter is not as simple: although different texts can be sung to one and the same *kagok* piece, setting the texts to the music is more complicated, so singers usually vary only among the texts that they have been taught as separate songs, or those extant in scores. Yi Sŭngyun (personal communication 2014) commented to me that she chooses *sijo* texts that fit the season for her *kagok* performances. I cannot say for sure whether she was referring to texts already in the canon as *kagok* songs, or whether she was actually setting *sijo* texts without a precedent as *kagok* texts to the *kagok* melody, although at the time I interpreted her words as referring to the latter. Moon Hyun meanwhile laments the impoverishment in performance practice with regard to *kagok* texts. Unlike in the past when those who sang *chŏngga* sang *chapka* and folksong as well, nowadays,

*chŏngga* specialists sing only *chŏngga*, but they don't even sing the entire *chŏngga* canon properly. Let's look at *kagok* and *kasa* first. The number of *kagok* scores for male and female voice that Kim Kisu published is substantial, and yet the amount of *kagok* texts sung to each kind of *kagok* is in a ratio of 1:1, so the *kagok* repertoire is diminished. In *kasa*, meanwhile, where only twelve songs are transmitted, even a single song is not properly sung in its entirety, under the pretext that the time it takes to sing it is too long – which again diminishes the repertoire. With these trends it appears that, unlike in late Chosŏn times when types of *kagok* and *sijo* were increasing,<sup>5</sup> not even the actual repertoire of transmitted *chŏngga* songs is widely sung; to the contrary, the repertoire seems to be in a dark age in which it will proceed to slim down and show signs of distortion in just a couple of decades (2015:16).

Moon never voiced such funereal prophecies towards me, and maybe they were not the kind of information on *chŏngga* that he wanted me to take home. The target of his disappointment is not readily identifiable since, if *chŏngga* risk being distorted, this seems to point to some problem in the transmission process within the preservation system. Audiences can hardly be blamed for not partaking in a lively *chŏngga* scene so, instead, I interpret Moon Hyun's words as a general admonition towards performers to take *chŏngga* seriously, dig deeper and endeavour to immerse

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<sup>5</sup> Moon likely refers to new pieces being created through the setting of new texts to the music.

themselves in the tradition, rather than just following in the steps of the teacher. Moon's evocation of practice in Chosŏn times, in particular, rings of the kind of appeal often made by advocates of historical performance practice. The reproach with regard to *kasa* is unusual, however, since even in the song collection *Chŏnggu yŏngŏn* that was first published in 1728, the *kasa* are given in excerpts, so although a number of stanzas are extant for many of them, the documentation does not support the precedent of a tradition of singing *kasa* in their entirety (Yim Jae-Wook 2004). In fact, the recordings of the twelve *kasa* by Moon's teacher and *kasa* property holder Yi Yang-gyo likewise do not contain all stanzas, and had all stanzas been recorded in all cases, single songs would likely extend for more than 30 minutes in some cases.

This, however, is not to say that there is no merit to Moon Hyun's observation that the approach of Korean performers in the field of *chŏngga* and other genres can sometimes seem streamlined and uninspired, and the sort of enthusiasm which unearths obscure repertoires and practices which, admittedly, would make performances more interesting for experts rather than for novices, is lacking.<sup>6</sup> There is enough documentation to warrant something like a Korean counterpart to the Western historical performance practice movement appearing, and to take the past as the starting point for innovation without violating the rules of the property appointments. But, on the whole, Korean performance practice tends to cherish the conventional – the performance of the long, full story *wanch'ang* in *p'ansori*, which has come into fashion only in the last decades, is a notable exception to this trend. Among the almost 5000 extant *sijo* texts, hardly more than a few dozen are ever used in concerts, and Pak Mun-gyu has likewise voiced his surprise that no singer sings versions of the *kasa* that include all the extant verses.

To return to *sijo*, the range of variation in regional practice was likely considered to have been too broad, even though, as discussed above, the property system has in the past had no qualms to appoint and favour certain regional folk songs or shaman rituals over others, sometimes occasioning the demise of the version which lost out. Pak Mun-gyu's suggestion of an apparent

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<sup>6</sup> As I write this, the last mail order catalogue of a book seller on my desk offers the complete organ works of Johann Michael and Johann Christoph Bach, uncles of Johann Sebastian Bach. Moon understandably laments that similar efforts to explore the boundaries of the great tradition are not viable in his field.

compromise in appointing local *sijo* styles as regional properties is challenged by the fact that regional properties come nowhere close in importance, support and standing to the national ones, as will be discussed in the following section on regional *sijo* styles. In an interview at her *Kagok* Transmission Centre (*Kagok chönsugwan*) in Seoul on 26 August 2015, Kim Yönggi proposed another explanation, suggesting that compared to *kagok* and *kasa*, *sijo* is a genre pertaining to popular culture, without the same degree of specialization attached to the former two:

I think compared to *kagok* and *kasa*, *sijo* has always been held as slightly more of a popular and common song. Now when I say ‘common song’ – *minyo*, of course, are common and popular as well...<sup>7</sup>

But the focus, even when you look inside the genre, actually... (pauses)<sup>8</sup> *Kagok* has always been recognized as far more of an art; *kasa*, too, was developed for expert singers. *Sijo*, however, more than such genres for expert singers, slightly lacks this recognition as a professional repertoire, coming from a popular song that even amateurs could sing, something within the reach of anyone. So I think that is how the awareness that this<sup>9</sup> should be done came too late, people thought of this too late, seeing how it is a popular song. And *sijo*, compared to *kagok* or *kasa*, allows for – should I call it change? For example, that you have *yöngje* and *nunje*, but then something like *söganje* is born and can take the lead; because of such, you could almost say, flexibility, it may have been impossible, because of such considerations. Couldn’t *sijo* have been passed over because there was seen to be a problem with its status as an expert genre, *sijo* as a property?

Kim Yönggi, then, explains the reasons for *sijo*’s non-appointment as a sort of oversight at the time of the other *chöngga* appointments, the 1960/1970s, when *sijo* was still popularly sung and not seen to necessitate any preservation effort. Seeing a problem in the recent changes in the *sijo* tradition, however, suggests that the *wönhyöng* of other genres indisputably fell into place, but while this argument holds up in comparison to *kagok* and *kasa*, it is less convincing when *sijo* are viewed next to various appointed folk genres. Although Kim does not seem fundamentally

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<sup>7</sup> *Kyönggi*-style *minyo* were appointed in 1975 as Important Intangible Cultural Property No. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Kim referred to the focus of the property system within the genre of *chöngga*.

<sup>9</sup> Kim referred to a possible appointment of *sijo* here.

opposed to an appointment for *sijo*, she is – as the property holder for *kagok* – first and foremost a *kagok* singer, as will be discussed in Chapter 8. A comparison with how a substantial number of other singers rank *sijo* leads me to suspect that Moon Hyun is not the only one who would disagree with the view that *sijo* is not specialized enough to be seen as intangible property material and see such disregard as jeopardizing *sijo*’s standing and future.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say, of course, that there are no *chŏngga* singers who would agree with Kim Yŏnggi, and such divergent value judgments and preferences are not unheard of in a performance art in which performers specialize. By way of comparison, in Western classical music we need only think of Canadian pianist Glenn Gould who famously shunned the majority of the Romantic piano repertoire which is central to many other pianists’ performance activities.

In conclusion, there is, then, no wholly satisfying argument for *sijo* not becoming a property – every possible reason for disqualification has not hindered appointment in the cases of other properties. As concerns a possible appointment of *kyŏngje* *sijo* at least as a regional property, Moon Hyun’s call is justified, given the recent appointment in 2012 of *sŏgamje* *sijo* as North Ch’ungch’ŏng Province Regional Intangible Property No. 26, with Yi Sangnae as property holder. Undoubtedly, the case for *kyŏngje*’s ties to the tradition is greater than for *sŏgamje*. Yet, regional properties are the responsibility of local authorities, so the cases of *kyŏngje* and *sŏgamje* are decided in different places. At the national level, meanwhile, the Heritage Policy Bureau may just be acting on the basis of practical considerations, since, despite Moon’s misgivings, *kyŏngje* *sijo* is preserved by association through the appointments of *kagok* and *kasa*. *Sŏgamje*, on the other hand, should its popularity wane, would be prone to extinction, being, all things considered, a modern tradition with substantial ties to the past, crafted by a master singer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – not unlike, in fact, *samulnori* percussion music which exhibits a number of similarities (not including – for *sŏgamje* at least – commercial viability).

Although *sijo* is not a national property itself, it is indirectly protected through the related appointments of *kagok* and *kasa*, both of whose holders sing *sijo* as well, so *sijo* collaterally

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<sup>10</sup> See discussion in Chapter 8.3.

experienced the same effects as the other genres. It is, then, pertinent to ask if and to what degree the same points of criticism that have been formulated with regard to other genres hold true for *chŏngga* as well, and in this regard the three *chŏngga* genres are sufficiently closely related in their destiny for a distinction between them to be irrelevant. Indeed, throughout *kugak*'s journey into modernity, cohesion in the performance context is more pronounced for *chŏngga* than for other genres. Despite its philosophical dimension, *chŏngga* is not religious music and was never part of ritual, and nor did it serve a function in social activities such as work or festivals. While the performance context of the withdrawn scholar practising *chŏngga* for his own cultivation may have disappeared, *chŏngga*'s past role as entertainment music in parties and banquets is the closest we come to the modern performance context. In other words, the recontextualization, marked by the opening of the National Gugak Center in 1951, of *sijo* and other *chŏngga* as a stage performance genre (Moon Hyun 2015:54), that is, a singer singing in front of and for the appreciation of an audience, is in the spirit of the *chŏngga* tradition as it was practised in Chosŏn dynasty. The greatest difference is probably the unfamiliarity with the music in most audiences nowadays. Yi Sŏngyun notes that other differences are owed to the technical circumstances of modern *chŏngga* concerts: bigger concert halls and compositions influenced by *p'ansori*-style delivery force singers to sing louder or, occasionally, to even use microphones, circumstances that change vocal production in a way that sits uneasily with the conception in the past of *chŏngga* as *silleak*,<sup>11</sup> 'indoors music' (Yi Sŏngyun, personal communication 2015).

In assessing the system's impact on stylistic diversity, the previous two chapters have shown that the damage was already done and such diversity had suffered irreparably during Korea's transition into modernity in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Wŏnhyŏng* narratives notwithstanding, the appointment decisions in the system have reflected surprising tolerance with the appointment of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae as a *kasa* holder. Likewise, Hong Wŏn'gi was famous for his *ujo sijo* and *ujo chirŭm sijo*, a repertoire associated with *p'yŏngmin kagŏek* in the past and certainly not transmitted

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<sup>11</sup> 室内樂 – house – inside – music.

by Ha Kyuil. Now, while these singers have been appointed, they were certainly not encouraged to transmit Chŏlla Province-style *kagok* or *ujo sijo*, and the fixation of the *wŏnhyŏng* as being in the Ha Kyuil tradition likely discredited the *sagyech'uk*-style *chŏngga* school further than it already had been because of its *p'yŏngmin* class association, but it was no more than the deathblow to an already moribund tradition. In summary, the system does not bear a primary responsibility for the decrease in artistic diversity in the case of *chŏngga*.

Similarly, the appointment of *chŏngga* genres has not pushed other related genres into oblivion: If anything, this is what should have happened to *sijo*, as the lesser, non-appointed cousin to *kagok* and *kasa*. Yet the promotion of *sijo* as national poetry (see Chapter 1) and the inseparable association of the trinity of *chŏngga* genres have ensured that nothing like this has happened. It is notable that several repertoires within the *chapka* genre, some of which are described as being close to *kasa* and *sijo* in style and social context, have their own appointments. Although the fixation of the *kasa* canon can seem a bit arbitrary, it dates back to at least the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the *kagok* canon was fixed already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so the property system cannot be said to have interfered in the canonization process. As far as the regional properties are concerned, regional *sijo* styles are frequently pictured as being threatened *despite* being protected, especially due to the proliferation of *sŏgamje sijo* in many places (Moon Hyun 2015:44; Lim Mi-Sun 2011:116). Admittedly, they would fare better if they were appointed in the national, rather than the regional system, but then marketing each of the regional *sijo* styles as 'important national' properties would be a challenge. If anything, *sŏgamje sijo*, as the most popular style, is pushing other forms of regional *sijo* into oblivion, in what may be an unavoidable result of a globalized Korea in which the formerly near unsurpassable mountain ranges are crossed by KTX trains in a matter of hours and, furthermore, proof that developments – one style or version taking primacy over others – happen regardless of preservation efforts.

Above I have described Howard's discussion (2012) of a controversy around court ritual dance in which different agents fought over control of a genre, for which the memories of

performers on the one hand, and documentation on the other, suggested different practices. The applicability of similar criticism with regard to the vetoing of revisions of the *wŏnhyŏng*, even on the basis of newer documentation, in this context is a bit more tricky to evaluate for *chŏngga* than other genres, partly owing to the overarching figure of Ha Kyuil. Through his impressive lineage, Ha Kyuil's grasp on the *chŏngga* tradition is considered little less than infallible. Furthermore, while research on *chŏngga* looks at documents pre-dating the transmission at the *Yimangjik aakpu*, practice does not. A debate like the one Howard discusses is unlikely in *chŏngga*, for two reasons: the stakes in an entertainment genre are not as high as in a centuries-old ritual with considerable spiritual significance, and the documentation on *chŏngga*, for the same reason, was compiled by aficionados, not court officials, so it is not detailed enough to find dramatically different elements in it and claim them as the unalterable original, rather than just a past version subject to artistic change. As I have pointed out earlier, *chŏngga* singers nowadays sound decidedly different to the recordings by Ha Kyuil, but there is no compelling motivation to return to Ha's versions, as we find in the case discussed by Howard, in which Sungkyunkwan University rests its authority partly on its proper understanding and execution of Confucian etiquette and ritual as practised before the 20<sup>th</sup>-century colonial period.

All things considered, it appears that the changes in performance practice wrought by the property system on *chŏngga* are comparably insignificant, with most changes owed to the same degree to social and cultural change evident in Korea in general. Whatever negative impact there may have been appears to be outweighed by the threat of extinction that *chŏngga* faced without the sponsorship within the framework of the preservation system. The biggest change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then, is the institutionalization of *chŏngga*, which has changed its dynamic just like that of other *kugak* genres. As has been discussed in Chapter 5, *chŏngga* is not catering primarily to the audiences anymore, but responds to input from the institutional level.

### 6.3 Regional *sijo* properties and *sŏgamje*



The Korean preservation system remains particular and distinct from those enacted in other countries, in that it is a two-tiered system with designations both at the national and the provincial/city level. This section discusses regional *sijo*, including four types protected as regional properties. Regional *sijo* styles play a subordinated role in present-day Korea. They are practices outside the *kugak* mainstream and therefore not subject to the rigidity of institutionalization that the national property system and centralized *kugak* practice in the National Gugak Center and university departments brought. Yet, neither have they been able to profit substantially from the blessings that institutionalization afforded in terms of financial support and an increase in prestige. Regional *sijo* styles are recognized as regional cultural properties, but are not taught in any institution, and while this may have afforded holders increased prestige and a sense of honour in their often small hometowns, few other concrete benefits have accrued. The mainstream *kugak* scene and the centre of South Korean cultural and societal life which are concentrated in Seoul look at regional *sijo* with indifference. In a sense, regional *sijo* has remained what it always was – a local phenomenon, a genre practised by aficionados, in the original meaning of the Spanish term *afición* (that is, a hobby). *Sŏgamje* *sijo* has further endangered regional *sijo*'s precarious status, so regional *sijo* are under threat of extinction or, in the case of *yŏngje* near moribund, as Yeh Chang-kun pointed out to me (personal communication, 24 August 2015).

Four major regional distinctions for local *sijo* styles exist in the present: *naep'ŏje* *sijo* from Ch'ungch'ŏng provinces in the west, *nanje* *sijo* from Chŏlla provinces in the southwest, *yŏngje* *sijo* from Kyŏngsang provinces in the southeast and *kyŏngje* *sijo* from Kyŏnggi Province in the northwest which includes Seoul; the styles from places other than Kyŏnggi Province are also subsumed under the term *hyangje*.<sup>12</sup> The *sijo* style practised in institutions is invariably *kyŏngje* *sijo*. Although regional *sijo* are practised by amateurs, this does not allow the reverse conclusion that amateur singers sing regional *sijo*; instead the style favoured among present-day amateur *sijo*

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<sup>12</sup> 鄉制 – countryside – make.

singers tends to be *sŏgamje* sijo, a new amalgam of different sijo styles practised from the 1950s onwards, which will be included in the discussion below despite not being a regional sijo style in the traditional sense. Historically, sijo singing originated in Seoul and spread to the countryside in the form of *p'yŏng* and *sasŏl* sijo, presumably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following excerpt from a monthly publication dating to 1930 by the sijo literature scholar Yi Pyŏnggi (1891-1968), is cited in Moon Hyun (2015:33-4) and offers insight into the state of sijo singing in its era:

While in Kyŏngsŏng<sup>13</sup> there were *chŏngak kip'an* sijo [*kisaeng*-style sijo], *literati*-style sijo, *sagyechip* sijo etc., in the countryside there were full *yŏngje* and half *yŏngje*<sup>14</sup> in Yŏngnam, and *naep'oje*, upper *naep'oje* and lower *nae'poje* in Hojung.<sup>15</sup>

*Kyŏngje* sijo is the style of Seoul and the surrounding Kyŏnggi Province, so all my discussion so far has referred to this style of sijo except where noted otherwise; as mentioned above, it is not protected as a regional property. The distinctions made by Yi Pyŏnggi in the above quotation are taken up by Moon Hyun (2015:36-9)<sup>16</sup> in the form of a distinction between *kisaeng*-style *kip'an* sijo and literati-style *sŏnbip'an* sijo; in his classification, however, he defines *kip'an* sijo as the sijo style that the *kisaeng* learned at the *kwŏnbŏn* by their instructors from the *sagyech'uk* class. We can wonder what Yi Pyŏnggi meant when he explicitly distinguished *kip'an* sijo from *sagyechip* sijo. More importantly, though, as I have shown in Chapters 4 and 5, a number of *kisaeng* learned from teachers in the Ha Kyuil lineage. Moon Hyun, however, classifies only Chi Kŭmjŏng as being in the *sŏnbip'an* tradition despite having trained as a *kisaeng*, so apparently the classification is somewhat subjective in that it is based on the singing style as it appears in recordings rather than on actual lineage. It seems that certain caution is in order regarding the usage of the *kip'an/sŏnbip'an* division.

<sup>13</sup> 京城, the name of Seoul during the colonial era (Japanese: Keijō).

<sup>14</sup> The term refers to a mix between *yŏngje* and *kyŏngje* which aimed to bring together the best of both, namely the robustness of the former and the brightness of the latter; this is reportedly the sijo type that *sŏgamje* is based on.

<sup>15</sup> Collective term for North and South Ch'ungch'ŏng provinces.

<sup>16</sup> Moon's teacher Yi Yang-gyo uses the distinction too.

Since regional *sijo* are often sung without instrumental accompaniment, the final *changdan* of the beginning and the middle section which would feature an instrumental postlude are typically shortened. The tonal range in all regional styles is enhanced through the inclusion of the five-tone *ujo* mode, which is seen as bright and brisk in character, in addition to the usual *kyemyŏnjo*.

### ***Naep'oje sijo***

*Naep'oje sijo*,<sup>17</sup> the *sijo* style of Ch'ungch'ŏng provinces, is presumed to have been the first *sijo* style to branch off from *kyŏngje sijo*<sup>18</sup> and was recognized in 1992 as Regional Property No. 17 of South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. It originates in the northwest of South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, and the term *naep'o* is used to refer to the collective of Sŏsan, Tangjin, Yesan and Hongsŏng cities. *Naep'oje sijo*, then, used to be further subdivided into two separate strands, one of which was that of *naep'o* region, the primordial *naep'oje sijo*, which is said to have been closer to recitation than singing, with extremely little detail and ornamentation, and slow as befitted the temperament of the people in the region (You Dae-Yong 2010).

Yu Han'gyŏng,<sup>19</sup> the figurehead of *naep'oje sijo*, So Tonggyu and Im Chŏlho are considered the three master singers of *naep'oje*. The first property holder was So Tonggyu (?-1995), a disciple of Yun Chongsŏn, a master singer in Seoul. Kim Wŏnsil (?-2008) became the second holder after So Tonggyu's passing, succeeded by the third and current holder, Kim Yŏnso, in 2010.

A second strand from the northeast of South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province was protected as "Lower *Naep'oje*" under the same number through the appointment of Pak In'gyu (b.~1944)<sup>20</sup> in 2014. However, this division into two strands apparently does not correspond to the above-mentioned division drawn in the past. The second style, which is usually distinguished as *sŏp'anje*

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<sup>17</sup> 内浦制 – inside – inflow – make; the first two characters are an old geographic name which literally means "remote/inaccessible waters/water's edge".

The term *naep'oje* is also used to refer to the *p'ansori* style typical of the region.

<sup>18</sup> Sin Ŭnju, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry 'Naep'oje'.

<sup>19</sup> As there are few published materials on regional *sijo* property holders, lifedates are unavailable for the majority of them, but given where known, sometimes calculated on the basis of newspaper articles and blog entries online.

<sup>20</sup> His real name is Pak Sŏnung.

(Western-style) *sijo*, was transmitted from Cho Samun to Kim Kyöngsuk to Yi Mun'gyo,<sup>21</sup> who taught Yu Hūngbok, Yu Pyöngik and Hong Sunböm among others, who then taught the latter generation that includes Pak In'gyu and a second expert, Yu Hyönggon. Another holder was appointed in 2004 for Yöngdūng-area *naep'oje* *sijo* as Regional Property No. 14 of North Ch'ungch'öng Province – Han Usöp, a disciple of Chöng Kuik. However, there are doubts as to the authenticity of his style, and no second holder was appointed after Han Usöp's passing.

*Naep'oje* stylistically falls between *kyöngje* and *yöngje* *sijo*, and is seen as particularly melodically stable because it does not switch to the high register in the middle section. Through a falling motion on final notes it achieves the effect of an aftertone (cf. discussion of *yöüm* in Chapter 7.2). *Naep'oje* does not feature the type of vocalization known as *soksöng*, “inner voice”, associated with the female *kagok* repertoire, and makes extensive use of ornamentation. The Yöngdūng-area variant contained a repertoire consisting of *p'yöng pan'gak*, *sasöl*, *yöch'ang chirüm*, *namch'ang chirüm*, *chunghöri* and *yökküm* *sijo* and used only *kyemyönjo* mode.

### **Wanje sijo**

*Wanje*<sup>22</sup>*sijo* was in 1995 appointed Regional Property No. 10 of Kwangju, currently one of several South Korean ‘special cities’ with certain administrative autonomy, but formerly the capital of South Chölla Province. *Wanje* *sijo* was also appointed as Regional Property No. 14 of North Chölla Province in 1996, and for a third time in 1999 as Regional Property No. 33 of South Chölla Province.

The first holder of the Kwangju Property was Yi Sangsul (b.~1929-?), a student of Pak Hüisöng, Pak Namgyu, An Ch'isön, Yu Chonggu and Chöng Kyöngt'ae; to date no further

<sup>21</sup> According to Sin Ŭnju (*Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘Naep'oje’), Yi Mun-gyo's teacher was Yi Chongsöng who authored scores of the authentic *söp'anje* which Yu Hūngbok used for studying. Moon Hyun doubts that Yi Chongsöng was a good singer and taught Yi Mun-gyo (2015:42); the difference between the styles of Yu Hūngbok and those of Yi Mun-gyo's other students is not entirely clear in his account. *Kasa* property holder Yi Yang-gyo learned *naep'oje* *sijo* from Yi Mun-gyo and Yu Pyöngik. See Moon Hyun (2015:41-43) for a detailed account of further singers associated with *naep'oje* *sijo*. See also You Dae-Yong 2010.

<sup>22</sup> 完制 – complete – make. Originally the style of the area around the cities Chönju and Wanju in North Chölla Province, the first character refers back to the name of the second of these.

holder for the Kwangju Property has been appointed after his passing. The North Chŏlla Province Property has four past and two present holders, the past holders being Im Sanbon (b. 1932), who was the first and became an honorary holder in 2009 when he had become unable to sing for health reasons, as well as Pak Insu (?-2013), Kim Chongsu (1911-?) and Ch'ae Kyunam, all of whom have passed away. The current holders are O Chongsu, appointed in 2006 and a disciple of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae and Yu Chonggu, and Kim Yŏnghŭi, appointed in 2012. The holder of the South Chŏlla Property is Son Hansul (b.1925), who was appointed in 1999; no detailed information on this designation and its holder is readily available.

The majority of sijo in *wanje* are *p'yŏng* and *sasŏl* sijo, but more obscure types such as *ŏt* sijo and *pansasŏl* sijo feature as well. *Sasŏl* sijo, the most common type in the *wanje* repertoire were originally transmitted from Ch'oe Irwŏn (1905-~1953) to Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae.<sup>23</sup> Unlike *kyŏngje* sijo, *wanje* sijo does not feature *soksŏng* and the *chŏnsŏng* (rolling sound), a short vibrato that lasts for less than a beat, is executed more thickly than in *kyŏngje* or other regional styles, all of which creates a rich style which has been described as “overflowing with Chŏlla people’s unique vigour”.

Moon Hyun puts *wanje* sijo’s link to tradition into fundamental doubt, pointing out the lack of a mention of *wanje* in the above quotation by Yi Pyŏnggi, citing Yi Yang-gyo as proposing that *wanje* sijo did not come into existence until the mid-1950s, and suggesting that the style was a classification undertaken by Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae or even, we might say in following Hobsbawm (1983), a tradition “invented” by Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae. Moon Hyun further contends that virtually all property holders can be traced back to Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae in their teaching lineage, and that the iconic *sasŏl* sijo repertoire in *wanje* consists for a great part of sijo texts written by Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae himself (2015:43). However, a number of singers before Chŏng, including Ch'oe Irwŏn, are associated with *wanje* sijo (Lim Mi-sun 2000:78), although no details of the teaching relationships between them and few details about their style are known. There are, however, a

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<sup>23</sup> This transmission genealogy is cited in Yi Sora, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘*Sijoch'ang*’, one of several mislabelled entries treating *wanje* sijo; however, no mention is made of Choe Irwŏn teaching Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae in various accounts of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae’s life and teaching genealogy, including the writings of Lim Mi-sun who published research about both singers, which makes this transmission link doubtful.

number of early recordings of Ch'oe Irwŏn, dating back as far as the 1930s, which give insight into his style of *wanje* sijo. So while it is not true that *wanje* sijo did not exist before Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae, he did leave a disproportionate mark on the tradition.

### ***Yŏngje* sijo**

*Yŏngje*<sup>24</sup> sijo was first appointed in 1990 as Regional Intangible Property No. 6 of special city Taegu, the principal city in North Kyŏngsang Province. The first holder was Yi Kirŭng (1901-1996),<sup>25</sup> and a second holder, Ch'ae Sukcha (1908-1995), was appointed later the same year. *Yŏngje* sijo is documented as having existed since the reign of King Kojŏng (ruled 1867-1907), when it was practised by a famous trinity of master singers, Ko Yŏngt'ae,<sup>26</sup> Yi Mŏngsŏ and Son Tŏkkyŏm (1849-1916). The next generation featured a disciple of the latter, Kim Yŏngdo, next to Yi Kyesŏk, Ch'ae Sukcha and Ch'oe Yun. The first holder, Yi Kirŭng, like Yi Kyesŏk and Ch'ae Sukcha a disciple of Kim Yŏngdo,<sup>27</sup> played an important role in the transmission of the style through his foundation of the *Yŏngnam chŏnggagwŏn* (Yŏngnam Chŏngak Institute) in 1968. There, he collated notations together with Kim Yŏngdo, one of these notations being for the *p'yŏng* sijo *T'aesani* (Example 6.1) which, kindly procured by Yeh Chan-kun, is included in the appendix to this thesis. Upon his passing in 1996, Kim Yŏngdo's disciple Pak Sŏnae was appointed a year later. Since 2010, the style has held a second appointment as property No. 34 of South Kyŏngsang Province with Yi Chongnok (b.~1944), a student of Pak Sŏnae, as the holder.

The majority of sijo in *yŏngje* are *p'yŏng* and *sasŏl* sijo. It is seen as an especially musical, graceful and dignified style, but struggles for survival more than the other regional styles. The abrupt articulation of the words that stems from the region's strong accent subverts the usual flow of

<sup>24</sup> 嶺制 – head – make; the first character stems from the old geographical name for the area 'Yŏngnam'.

<sup>25</sup> Also spelled as Yi Kinŭng.

<sup>26</sup> A recording of *p'yŏng* sijo by Ko Yŏngt'ae from 1935 can be listened to on Youtube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CskMnfHLWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CskMnfHLWk)

<sup>27</sup> Ch'ae Sukcha's style is sometimes doubted as being authentically *yŏngje* for her "fine voice" (Korean: *sokch'ŏng* (細聲)/*sech'ŏng* (細聽)) vocal style. She is said to have learned briefly from Yi Mŏngsŏ, as well as from Kim Yŏngdo, who, however, may have been a different singer with the same name as Yi Kirŭng's teacher who would have been an amateur whereas Ch'ae Sukcha's teacher was a famous professional (Moon Hyun 2015:39-40, footnote 30).

sijo and endows it with a feel seen as energetic, magnificent, manly and expressive of the region's spirit.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Sŏgamje sijo***

*Sŏgamje*<sup>29</sup> sijo was appointed as Regional Property No. 26 of North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province in 2012 with Yi Sangnae as the first holder. He started his sijo studies with Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae in 1959, further learned from Kim Wŏlha, Han Usŏp, Pak In'gyu and later Yi Kwansŭng, and is proficient in all regional sijo styles with the exception of *yŏngje*. *Sŏgamje* is a new sijo style created by Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae, one of the property holders for *kaſa*. It is based on the above-mentioned half *yŏngje* that Chŏng modified slightly to create his new style. The procedure and motivation are described by Lim Mi-sun:

Thus, while Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae was extensively immersing himself in the study of sijo, *kagok*, *kaſa* and *p'unngnyu* (see Chapter 7.3),<sup>30</sup> he put his heart and soul especially into the dissemination of sijo. In this project, his most urgent problems were that the singing technique advocated by each singer for his style was always different, and that the traditional styles, no matter how good they were, did in his perception not match the standard pitches. Therefore, he modified the *changdan* and melodies used in the extant sijo repertoire and created *sŏgamje* sijo (Lim Mi-sun 2011:118).

*Sŏgamje* sijo, then, is an attempt to standardize pitches, vocalization techniques and *changdan* in order to create a style simple enough to be widely sung. Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae further founded a sijo lover society, the *Taehan sinhoe*, and in 1964 started a sijo dissemination movement which included country-wide lectures and sijo singing contests that continue to be held up to the present day.

As mentioned above, *sŏgamje* sijo and the sijo dissemination movement have been criticized for enfeebling local sijo traditions. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae enormously contributed to the popularization and spread of sijo. Ultimately, then, our

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 8.4 for further discussion on *yŏngje* sijo's aesthetic; Jung Sue-eun (2012) traced *yŏngje* sijo's stylistic characteristics by comparing them to those of *kyŏngje* sijo and folksong in *Yŏngnam* area.

<sup>29</sup> 石菴制 – stone – rock – make; the first two characters, 'Sŏgam', are the penname of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 4.6 for details on Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae's life and studies.

conclusions about *sŏgamje* sijo will depend on the view we adopt about what we consider congruous with the sijo tradition. Is it an academic and pure tradition, sung in remote ivory towers by a handful of property holders, or a less specialized and less diverse, popularized tradition in which a broader demographic partakes? Not surprisingly, sijo specialists like Moon Hyun have tended to favour the former take on the tradition and have, consequently, been rather critical of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae and *sŏgamje* sijo. In this, it does not help that Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae and Moon Hyun's teacher Yi Yang-gyo, the two property holders for *kaesa*, were hardly friends and represented opposing approaches to the tradition.

The spread of *sŏgamje* sijo can seem regrettable, but Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae as an encyclopaedic sijo specialist can hardly be blamed for his project and motivations. We may also wonder if the alternative to *sŏgamje* sijo would have been a lively scene of regional sijo, or no sijo scene at all, as the following evaluation by Lim Mi-Sun suggests:

*Sŏgamje* is nowadays the most widely sung form of sijo in the country. Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae's contributions to the dissemination of sijo have been received positively, but the country-wide propagation of *sŏgamje* has also been criticized for causing the discontinuation of traditional sijo styles and the suppression of regional characteristics, both of which can lead to a country-wide uniformity in sijo style. Yet, ahead of such criticism, we need to acknowledge the dissemination efforts and the contributions to a sijo revival... (2011:116).

### Other regional styles

The existence of a number of other regional schools is sometimes advocated: *Namje*,<sup>31</sup> associated with Kwangju and Naju in South Chŏlla Province, *Yŏngje*,<sup>32</sup> from Yŏnggwang in South Chŏlla, and Changsu and Muju in North Chŏlla, *Wŏnje*,<sup>33</sup> from Ch'unch'ŏn in Kangwŏn Province, and *Kwansŏje*,<sup>34</sup> attributed to the North Korean region by Kim Wŏlha. Moon Hyun, admitting the

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<sup>31</sup> (南制 – south – make);

<sup>32</sup> (靈制 – divine – make);

<sup>33</sup> (原制 – hill – make);

<sup>34</sup> (關西制 – Kwansŏ (two characters) – make);



possibility of the past existence of all these styles, points out that “their musical reality is unknown” (2015:35). Hence, there is little that can be written about them.

## Part III: The aesthetics of sijo

### Chapter 7. The *chǒngga* aesthetic: roots and conceptualizations in writings

#### Introduction

In this section I lay the foundation for the following parts about the musical aesthetic of sijo. I discuss some of the relevant components of the worldview that is manifest in the aesthetic sensibilities present in *chǒngak*. The components I identify are Confucianism, and to a lesser degree Daoism, both frequently filtered through earlier formulations in Chinese aesthetical thought. A crucial idea in these thought systems is that music morally influences people and, depending on the music's aesthetic, such influence can be good or bad. The following sections survey and comment on how the aesthetics of Korean traditional music, including *chǒngga* and in particular sijo, have been discussed in academic writings by Korean scholars (with a few exceptions by non-Koreans, in English, such as Rockwell 1972, Donna Kwon 1995, Howard 2004). I explore writings that approach aesthetics from a musical perspective, and refer readers back to Chapter 3 where the aesthetic of sijo texts is treated in detail.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, most of the writings surveyed are by musicologists, except for the publications by Shin Woong-Sun and Pak Sŏk, Korean literature and Chinese literature scholars respectively, who have developed new approaches to sijo's musical aesthetic based on their personal background and expertise.

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<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the musical setting of sijo is described in Chapter 1.4 and will not be discussed here.

In my discussion of aesthetics below, I will at times offer comparisons with Western classical music, a practice that I appreciate is unfashionable, having come to be associated with a Western bias, although not always with good reason, as Christopher Small notes:

Even those who try to right the balance by comparative study of other human musics most often avoid comparisons with Western classical music, thus emphasizing, if only in a negative way, its uniqueness and implicitly privileging it in reverse, although it is in fact a perfectly normal human music, an ethnic music if you like, like any other and, like any other, susceptible to social as well as purely musical comment (Small 1998:11).

Part of the reason I choose Western classical music as a reference point is that I believe *chŏngak* as a whole is the closest equivalent of classical music in the West within the Korean music tradition. The traits I see *chŏngak* to share are that it is a highly refined style of music (in contrast to the sometimes more formulaic *aak*) with ample documentation (in contrast to folk music), enjoyed by a class that comes closest to the European bourgeoisie.

### 7.1 The philosophical roots of *chŏngak* aesthetics

The relevance of Confucianism, *yungyo*,<sup>2</sup> is readily apparent, since the elite literati culture of Chosŏn dynasty that *chŏngak* was a part of was Confucian in its orientation, outlook and practice.<sup>3</sup> Hwang JunYon cites relevant passages from the Confucian classics that illustrate the spirit of the literati as “self-cultivation during usual times and the righteousness to save [one’s] country during crisis”, and the role of music as a tool of self-cultivation in this context (1999:255).

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<sup>2</sup> 儒教 – scholar – doctrine.

<sup>3</sup> The term Confucianism here refers to Neo-Confucianism. Strictly speaking, Chosŏn-era Confucianism in Korea was Neo-Confucianism, a take on Confucianism which referred to a new outlook and interpretation of the Classics that had its origin with Han Yu (768–824), among others, in Tang-dynasty China, and was developed in Sung-dynasty, notably by Zhu Xi (1130-1200). This was imported to Korea in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century (Hwang Joon-yon 1993:69, Wilhelm 2007:99-112). Although Confucianism was known in Korea from 108 BCE and during the Three Kingdoms Period (Hwang Joon-yon 1993:64-5), it experienced its heyday in the form of Neo-Confucianism during Chosŏn times.

The relevance of Daoism, *togyo*,<sup>4</sup> is less evident, although Daoist ideas held considerable influence in Korea in Unified Silla times, owing to the tradition's prevalence at the time in Tang-dynasty China (Littlejohn 2009:181-2), and had already surfaced in some form or other during the Three Kingdoms Period of Silla, Paekche and Koguryō. However, similarly to the influence of Buddhism, Daoism was restricted by the Chosŏn elite, and its lack of official endorsement during any period barred a fully-formed Daoist practice from developing on Korean soil. Instead, only certain elements, possibly those that resonated most with the Korean mentality such as geomancy and traditional medicine, were adopted, particularly in the folk realm where they were widely practised and sometimes condoned by the Confucian elite. The development of Daoism in Korea was limited, although Kim Nak-pil concedes that “contributions being made to this field by the scholars of Neo-Confucianism were substantial; however, this was confined to a position of Neo-Confucianism itself. In consequence, the approach from a pure position of the thought of philosophical Taoism has been nil [in its contributions, as judged] on the basis [of the evidence] available up to now” (1993:135-6, grammar adjusted). Nevertheless, the following sections reveal that certain aesthetic ideas bear strong Daoist overtones, although it is not easy to distinguish if these ideas are the result of Korean assimilation of Daoism or were imported as a whole from China, either as originally Daoist ideas absorbed into Confucianism, or as Daoist ideas already translated into Chinese aesthetic thought. Chinese aesthetic thought, in turn, represents a tradition which had come to certain conclusions based on Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist ideas. Although Chosŏn-era Korea saw its place in the world as following the Chinese, practice differed and Koreans had their own ideas about Confucianism. It is therefore worthwhile to identify some aesthetic ideas which the Chinese had already abstracted and which may have been introduced as a whole.

Buddhism is a third possible source for concepts in *chŏngak*. Disliked by the Confucian elite, its fate during the Chosŏn dynasty alternated between restriction, toleration and occasional short-

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<sup>4</sup> 道教 – way – doctrine.

lived endorsement (Kim Young-ho 1993:43-57), yet this does not preclude Buddhist ideas from having filtered into Korean *chōngak* aesthetics. Buddhist influences are often cited in the concept of the instrumental *p'ungnyu* genre, as will be explained below. However, there is little evidence of a substantial impact of Buddhist ideas in the aesthetic of literati music.

Confucianism and Daoism, which are linked<sup>5</sup> to the great thinkers Confucius (552 BCE – 479 BCE) and Laozi (lived approx. 6<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), respectively, have variously been described as religions, philosophies, social practices and political ideologies, and they bear traits of all of these and more. Because of the scope of the teachings contained and the wide range of areas and situations of human life and the human condition for which they offer explanations, solutions and guidance as a set of practices, they are hard to distil into a simple formula that contains some core message or imperative (as is possible with some Western religions or philosophical currents). Accordingly, Daoism and Confucianism were subject to endless revisions, re-interpretations and changes over the centuries. My account focusses both on these traditions as sets of practices that influence the individual, and on a discussion of the most fundamental principles.

There is some benefit in contrasting these two philosophies – I will call them philosophies here, for in the musical context it is what they come closest to in our understanding of the English word. They are less exclusive of other thought systems than monotheistic religions tend to be, and in practice it is evident that they have managed to coexist and even co-opt each other at times. Wilhelm writes that even the Confucian sage Mencius (~372 BCE – 289 BCE) who was critical of most other schools of thought “strangely enough tacitly spared Daoism, lashing out against it only in the form of its [hedonistic] interpretation by Yang Zhu [lived probably late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE]” (2007:43). Depending on each period and thinker, the two doctrines can be seen as competitive or complementary, including with regard to aesthetics. The most fundamental vocabulary used in Confucianism and Daoism does not have an exact equivalent in Western thought and language, but marks important premises about the world, humankind, morality and

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<sup>5</sup> Confucius, in particular, would not have seen himself as a creator or innovator, but would have claimed his ideas as based on those of older masters.

the forces at work in the cosmos that both are based on. Understanding these traditions hinges on a proper understanding of the terms used, so the most important ones in this context are explained here.

Despite what the Chinese pronunciation *dao* suggests, the concept of *to*<sup>6</sup> is not limited to Daoism. *To* literally means ‘way’ or ‘course’, and holds the former meaning in a range of Sino-Korean vocabulary, such as *tom*/road. In a philosophical context, it is used in the meaning of ‘way of living/being’ and by implication the *right* way of living/being.<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm points out that the character is composed of two components meaning ‘head’ and ‘go’, indicating directed and meaningful motion (2007:28). There is a Daoist *to*, a Confucian *to* and a Buddhist *to*, although without context or qualifier *to* usually refers to the Daoist way. The *to* is not a being, much less a god, but can more accurately be seen as a principle that is being pursued, or in the case of Daoism, an experience of transcendence.

Ancient Chinese cosmological thinking has described the world in terms of a number of concepts which take a central role in Daoism, but precede it and were later introduced to Neo-Confucian thought by Zhou Dunyi (1017–1073); these concepts are dated back as far as 2800 BCE in the earliest estimates, but certainly to the time before 221 BCE (Seo Jung Rock 2010:40). Of crucial importance are the concepts of *ki* (Chinese *qi*),<sup>8</sup> *ŭm* and *yang* (C. *yin/yang*)<sup>9</sup> and the five directions *obaeng* (C. *wuxing*).<sup>10</sup> These concepts are not limited to cosmology but bear on many aspects of Chinese civilization from astrology to medicine, physics, geomancy and music. *Ki* is sometimes translated as ‘energy’ or ‘vigour’, and may be seen as a sort of transformational force both material and immaterial, which is at the root of all processes. *Ki* encompasses the correlational forces of *ŭm* and *yang*. *Ŭm* and *yang* – literally shadow and light - are opposites but do not contradict each other, and are different states of the same thing. *Obaeng* literally means five

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<sup>6</sup> 道- way/course.

<sup>7</sup> The Neo-Confucian philosopher Han Yu (768–824) differs in this aspect and interprets the *to* by itself as an abstract term that does not yet contain its definition as wrong or right (Wilhelm 2007:100)

<sup>8</sup> 氣.

<sup>9</sup> 陰 陽.

<sup>10</sup> 五行.

movements or steps, but is often rendered as five elements or five phases. *Ohaeng* is a cycle that embodies the five elements (water, fire, stone, earth and metal), each of which has different associations and may be seen as a category with different things assigned to it, such as a cardinal direction (the fifth direction being centre), an animal, a plant, a colour, a season and so on, as a way to explain things in the world and the relationships between phenomena (cf. Seo Jung Rock 2010:41-3). The *ohaeng* constitute different states of *ki* and can be assigned to the *ŭm/yang* spectrum. *Hwa* (C. *hé*)<sup>11</sup> means harmony and denotes an ideal state of balance in which things are distinct from each other, but harmonic in their relations. *To*, then, is achieved through *hwa* between the *ŭm* and *yang* at work in *ki*.

Daoism, the oldest of the philosophical traditions at the root of Chinese civilization, revolves around the idea of Dao as “an energizing process that permeates and animates all of reality to move in its ongoing process” (Littlejohn 2009:1). More than perhaps any other philosophical tradition, Daoism defies being distilled into an essence, because it is in the nature of the Daoist worldview that Daoism itself is in a state of constant change, without clear limiting boundaries that mark ideas as being within or outside of the tradition of Daoism (cf. Littlejohn 2009:2-3). The impossibility of capturing the meaning of Dao in words is frequently emphasized in Daoist writings, for example in the *Daodejing* which states:

There is a thing chaotic yet perfect, which arose before Heaven and Earth.

Silent and indistinct, it stands alone and unchanging,

Going around it is tireless,

We can take it as the mother of Heaven and Earth.

I do not know its name.

I have styled it dao.

(DDJ , 25a, quotationd by Littlejohn 2009:14)

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<sup>11</sup> 和.

In a language that is often paradoxical and outright mystical, Daoist writings refer to Dao as something like superconsciousness or transcendence, a state beyond rational knowledge in which all opposites are dissolved, a state that is inaccessible through mere effort (cf. Wilhelm 2007:29, 43-5). Fundamental to this are the ideas of renouncing artifice and finding a way back to a presumed primordial nature. A Chinese friend with whom I was discussing a problem I had in Korea once told me: “In Chinese philosophy, we prefer to do everything in accordance with its natural tendency. Just try to do your best and don’t be regretful of the final result.”<sup>12</sup> Clearly, with this deontological reference to ‘Chinese philosophy’ he conveniently put into words a core concept in Daoism, one that is in stark contrast to the striving nature of Confucianism, which seeks transcendence through struggle and effort. Yet, Daoism holds that where a human lives true to his nature, no struggle or effort is necessary. In Daoist thought, “music is discussed as a communicative link between humans and nature, one innocent of artifice and artificiality. Consequently, music and dance are instruments of self-cultivation that bring us closer to nature around and within us” (De Woskin 2001:97).

The proper understanding and interpretation of Confucianism was considered a lifetime project for literati and Confucian philosophers in Korea, many of whom also authored *sijo* texts. Yi Hwang (1501-1570), better known as T’oegye, was only one of many who spent their entire lives writing commentaries on the Confucian classics (see Choung Haechang (1996) for an account of Yi Hwang’s philosophy). The ultimate goal for the Confucian individual is the cultivation of the self in order to achieve wisdom and become “a sage within” (Littlejohn 2011:xx-xxi), a human being transformed into the best version of itself. From the cultivation of the self springs greater benefit to a set of ever greater units, from the family to ultimately the state, as expressed in this quotation from *The Great Learning*, attributed to Confucius:

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<sup>12</sup> Lin Xin (林欣), written communication, 1 February 2011; grammar adjusted. His philosophy seems to have worked out, he works at Google now.



The ancients who wished to display illustrious virtue throughout the world, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their own states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts (*xin*, 心). Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things (Legge 1893 quotation in Littlejohn 2010).

For the individual, the Confucian quest has an internal component, the betterment of the self, and an external component, the betterment of the social relations into which the individual enters, in receiving and passing on education, and in a concern for the welfare of all humanity. These two internal and external components are the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the Confucian project, impossible to detach from each other. The Confucian project can only be realized for the individual as part of a social context, but this is in turn not possible without the vertical dimension of “a desire to cultivate the self in order to put oneself in tune with the Way” (Berthrong & Berthrong 2000:29). The ideal is ultimate harmony in the relationships of all things on earth as well as between heaven and earth, to be achieved through the cultivation of the smallest units. Thus, the Confucian exemplary person is on a never-ending quest for moderation, education and the attaining of wisdom: the Confucian *to*. Confucian teachings are flexible in their views of the ideal way to self-cultivation, and a number of masters over the course of history came to different conclusions. Most philosophers have agreed, however, that study, especially the study of the classics, was one of the ways, and that “quiet-sitting”, a practice of introspection, was another. Yet, the practice of quiet-sitting differed from the sort of meditation encountered in other traditions such as Buddhism, which sought a detached mental state. Meditation in Confucianism was sanctioned as only a way to help the mind-heart<sup>13</sup> understand its true nature: in contemporary parlance, we might say ‘reflect’. Where such understanding did not translate into

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<sup>13</sup> *Sim* (心, Chinese: *xin*), a concept that locates the source of emotions, knowledge and behaviour in humans, thus bearing all the attributes commonly associated with either ‘mind’ or ‘heart’.

ethical action, the purpose of meditation was missed (for Confucian writings on self-cultivation, see Littlejohn 2011:31-2). Practically then, cultivation of the self is achieved in a number of ways such as apprehension of the Confucian classics, the writings of the great masters, ritual, as well as the enhancement of talents such as calligraphy, poetry and music. Confucianism is distinct from the focus of Buddhism and Daoism in its concern with the real world, its insistence that “the world of objects and events is real and independent of the mentality and wishes of human beings” (Berthrong & Berthrong 2000:10). Confucianism is thus defined by its ‘concern for the world’ and stands out for its emphasis on ethical action, as opposed to the “Daoist and Buddhist proclivities toward excessive quietism” (Berthrong & Berthrong 2000:35).

With these descriptions in mind, the difficulty of identifying how exactly philosophical ideas translate into musical practice must be pointed out. In his account of the aesthetics and musical reality of Chinese literati music, Edward Ho writes:

Of the numerous aesthetic concepts in Chinese culture, there are many that can be applied to the study of traditional musical behaviour. There are, however, problems when theoretical considerations are applied to practice. It is known that aesthetic concepts were frequently discussed by literati in premodern China, and it can safely be assumed that these concepts were applied to the music-making of literati musicians. With the passing of time, however, musical behaviour has changed. Nowadays those musicians brought up in a traditional cultural environment where Confucianism, Daoism or Zen philosophy is practised may still be consciously thinking of certain aesthetic theories during their performance, or subconsciously reflecting them in their practice. But the majority are more likely to forget or ignore these theories and simply play by intuition, concentrating on technique and stylistic interpretation instead (1997:35).

In the Korean case, we find a situation that is similar in some ways and different in others. There is less of a music-related precedent of aesthetic discussion in premodern Korea, and many concepts seem to have been consciously applied to musical practice only as the result of recent theoretical considerations. With many philosophical traditions and aesthetical concepts to draw

on, it is hard, for Korean literati music, too, to assess if music is created and/or performed with specific concepts in mind, or whether it is simply part of a performance tradition that happens to be Confucian in its orientation.

I draw on Edward Ho again, taking him as the model for the approach I adopt:

[T]his paper merely presents one approach to understanding Chinese musical behaviour. Whilst emphasising the aesthetic principles as unspoken consciousness, one must not neglect the fact that a primarily oral transmission along with regional diversity has also played a critical role in shaping practice. The understanding of these aesthetic principles only forms part of the picture (1997:37).

It is my hope that possible divergences, and the relationship between theory and contemporary musical practice, will emerge with more clarity when this chapter is considered in tandem with the Chapter 8, in which I draw on field interviews to show the aesthetic approach of contemporary musicians within the tradition.

The main challenge of discussing aesthetics in Korean music lies in bringing order into an array of terms, concepts, emotions and more, all of which are proposed as playing a role in the aesthetic experience of Korean things. With the lines among the aforementioned categories often blurred, I proceed from the general to the specific, in a first step discussing aesthetic ideas in Korean traditional music in general, as far as they apply to *chōngga*, then moving on to *chōngga* specifically, and finally establishing what sets *sijo* apart aesthetically from *kagok* and *kasa*. At the end of each of these sections, I compare the findings to this section and where possible relate the aesthetic concepts to the philosophical traditions just discussed.

## 7.2 General aesthetic ideas and concepts in Korean traditional music

*Him* is a widely-used native Korean word for ‘strength’. In the context of music it is used in its literal meaning to denote practices or pieces that require physical effort.<sup>14</sup> In his discussion of

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. the interview with the singer Yeh Chan-kun in Chapter 8.4, in which Yeh repeatedly refers to *him* as a characteristic and challenging feature of *yōngje sijo*: “*hoek ūl ttak pukkŭlssi rūl hanŭn kōtch ’ōrōm him ūl*

philosophy and aesthetics in Korea, Byung-ki Hwang<sup>15</sup> describes another dimension of *him* as a principle of ‘universal vitality’ underlying all Korean music (2001:815-6). *Him*, then, denotes two properties of Korean sound production, namely, a tone colour that is complex – “powerful and vibrant” – rather than simple, and an inherent quality of fluctuation and dynamism in a single tone. The first of these two refers directly to a pitch’s overtone spectrum and indirectly compares the timbre of Korean instruments and vocal style to those present in Western classical music. The second is specified as a reference to Korean *sigimsae* ornamentation. Hwang describes an additional dimension of *him* in the melodic structure of Korean music: an alternation between states of tightening and loosening, or in less metaphorical words, between greater and lesser density in some musical parameters like rhythm, speed and so on. Hwang appears to be the only musicological scholar who directly subsumes these qualities under the term *him*, but his ideas are echoed in most other publications on aesthetics in Korean music, hence I will return to them below.

**Han**,<sup>16</sup> an elusive term which is difficult to translate, refers to an emotion best rendered as ‘resentment/bitterness/feeling of oppression’. It is commonly seen as an emotion present in Koreans – with exclusiveness, but also without exception, a collective, uniquely Korean emotion. *Han* is constructed as being the product of a unique series of setbacks the Korean people have suffered over the course of history. Although of pre-modern coinage, the concept of *han* has risen to prominence only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and has been appropriated in a variety of contexts and circumstances (listed in Howard 2004:3; see also Howard 2006a:78-80). *Han* is an especially important concept in folk music, above all in *p’ansori* where it is expressed most immediately. Yet, given *han*’s constitutive role in Korean identity, it is understood that it cannot be absent from *chōngga*. Reference to *han* in the context of *chōngga* is not frequent, but does

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*chunŭn kōt... him ŭl tūryōsō, ungjanghago, ssikssikhago.../Adding force, just as if you were pushing the brush for a stroke in calligraphy writing. With force added, magnificent and energetic...” Use of him as referring to physical effort in Korea is pervasive in relation to arts in general; see also the end of Chapter 8.3.*

<sup>15</sup> Byung-ki Hwang [Hwang Pyōnggi] (b.1936) is a notable *kayagūm* performer, scholar, and as a composer a crucial figure in the development of contemporary Korean music.

<sup>16</sup> 恨.

occur.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, a great number of *sijo* texts, for example those mourning the death of, or separation from a lover – the topics of many of the *sijo* written by female entertainers – would certainly be interpreted through the lens of *han* nowadays. The concept of *han* has at times been criticized by scholars who see in the tendency to explain everything by means of *han* an essentialising argument for a homogenous and exceptional Korean identity (e.g. O’Rourke 1998).

**Hŭng**<sup>18</sup> is usually rendered as ‘joy/excitement/ecstasy’, but ‘exaltation’ fits well as it approximates the literal meaning of the Sino-Korean character of a ‘heightened/elated’ state. O’Rourke defines it as “the excitement generated by the apprehension of beauty” (1998:35). One of the emotions and concepts constructed as archetypically Korean, *hŭng* is a pervasive theme in *sijo* texts. In the context of folk music the term *hŭng* is associated with “overwhelming enthusiasm generated by group participation in common activity” and the term is “referenced to underpin the Korean propensity towards dance and song done in the company of friends” (Howard 2006a:78). This does not make *hŭng* the primary concept put forward in connection with *chŏngga*, given that any overt expression of emotion is anathema to the ideal of expression in these genres, but it is mentioned in relation to *chŏngga* performance as well (see, e.g. Cho Kyu-Ick 1994:34, O’Rourke 2002:7, 10).<sup>19</sup>

**Changdan** is included here not as an element constitutive of musical structure, but for its aesthetic dimension. *Changdan*, often glossed as ‘rhythmic cycles’ and consisting of a combination of long and short sounds, are one of the elements responsible for the dynamism contained in the concept of *him* (Byung-ki Hwang 2001:815). More specifically, a *changdan* cycle corresponds to a sequence of the four parts, “rise, hang, bind, loosen”. Grouped in pairs, these four can again be

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the interview with the singer Yi Sŭngyun in Chapter 8.2: “*Kŭrigo sŭlp ’ŭm ŭl nat’anaenŭn han ŭl chŏngmal sŭlp ’ŏsŏ ttang ŭl ch ’yŏya toenŭn p’ansori rŭl [...] haeya toenŭnde/* And if the **han** giving away my sadness is such that I feel like singing a *p’ansori* that has me pounding the ground with my fists...”. The point in this quotation is that *han* cannot be expressed in the same way in *chŏngga* as in *p’ansori*.

<sup>18</sup> 興.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the interview with the singer Yi Sŭngyun in Chapter 8.2: “*Wŏlle chŏnggaranŭn kŏt... hŭng ŭl naeya toenŭn pubundo... hŭng ŭl naemyŏn an... hŭngiranŭn ke.../* actually what we mean by *chŏngga* and the fact that you have to be expressing **joy**... but can’t ... **joy** itself...”.

assigned to the cosmological cycle of *ŭm* and *yang* respectively. Viewed this way, *changdan* go beyond a mere rhythmical feature of the music and take on an aesthetic dimension.

**Mat** is a widely-used native Korean term for taste/flavour<sup>20</sup> and by implication ‘good taste’. This implication is reflected for example in the expressions *mat itta-ŏpta*/have-have not taste, in which food does not taste good or bad, but either has or does not have *mat*.<sup>21</sup> In a food context, *mat* can stand alone without further qualifiers – food can have *mat*, without a need to specify which *mat* – but it can be combined with adjectives such as spicy, clean and so on. In a figurative sense, *mat* is also used in aesthetic judgments. In this context it usually bears a qualifier or explanation specifying which *mat* something has. Interestingly, food comparisons are quite common, so it is not unusual for adjectives to be applied to music which normally describe food.<sup>22</sup>

**Mŏt** is a widely-used native Korean word that comes closest in translation to ‘charm’ or ‘gracefulness’. In everyday use it is, for example, not the typical word to describe the favourable appearance of a woman where *yeppŏda*/pretty is more common. However, it is often used to describe the favourable appearance of a man, in the same way that a man would not be called ‘pretty’ in English, implying that *mŏt* is related more to demeanour. In other words, *mŏt* implies some sort of charm that goes beyond mere appearance, so *mŏt* is not contained in a state, but rather in an action such as movement, demeanour and so on. Moreover, *mŏt* is seen as having connotations that make it uniquely Korean: *Mŏt* is at the same time the Korean word for ‘charm/gracefulness’, and the word for Korean ‘charm/gracefulness’, a ‘charm/gracefulness’ that is perceived as being uniquely Korean. A fitting example of the problem, a lesson on *mŏt* in a recent Korean language textbook gives this circular explanation: “The basis for the evaluation of Korean-style beauty is commonly understood as being *mŏt*” (Ch’oe Ŭn’gyu et al. 2012:184). As

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<sup>20</sup> *Mat* is limited to the meaning of taste as a sensory perception and does not contain the second meaning of ‘preference/judgment’ which the English word entails.

<sup>21</sup> With the German word ‘schmecken’, something similarly either does or does not taste.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the interview with the singer Kim Yŏnggi in Chapter 8.5: “*Sijojach’e nŭn kŭrigo chom tŏ tambaekhada* /And *sijo* itself is also a little more **plain and pure**.” The adjective *tambaekhada* typically denotes the taste of food.

such, *mōt* is often left untranslated, and it is the go-to term to describe the Korean aesthetic outlook as well as the yardstick for judging all sorts of Korean artistic output from areas as different as fine arts, pottery, architecture, fashion and music (see, for example, ‘*Mōt*: A Korean Approach to Life’, *Koreana* Vol.12, No.3 (1998)). Unlike the term *mat* above, *mōt* is an absolute quality so, whereas food and music can have different types of *mat* with their own specific merit,<sup>23</sup> I have never heard or seen the expression *kŭ mōt* – ‘this or that kind of *mōt*/a different kind of *mōt*’. Accordingly, *mōt* does not need any sort of qualifier. *Mat*, on the other hand, is typically used without a qualifier when referring to food – *masitta*/something has taste – but this expression is not applied to music. Instead musicians specify which exact kind of *mat* the music in question has. These are my own observations on the contemporary usage of *mat* and *mōt*, but they complement an older article by Byung-ki Hwang (1978) that sets out to define, among other things, *mat* and *mōt* by way of examples, although he ultimately does not achieve a clear way of defining and differentiating the two: “[T]here is still no means to elucidate how, in Korean traditional music *mōt* and *mat* can be tangibly achieved” (1978:32). Instead, they are explained as a sort of dual configuration in which each contains the other and retains its own character at the same time. Moreover, Hwang makes mention of the related concepts of *kŏnmōt*/outward *mōt*, or *sinmōt*/sour *mōt*, both of which serve to describe a superficial *mōt*, a mere outward appearance of *mōt* not to be confused with the real thing, as well as *songmōt*/inner *mōt*, a concept of importance particularly in the folk music realm which in its description, as “the beginning of a knowledge of loneliness and tribulations[...a humor] stained with shades of sadness” (1978:31), rings suspiciously like a close cousin to *han*. In a more recent publication on the topic, Hwang defines *mōt* as “delicately nuanced, connoting something attractive that deviates a bit from normality” (2001:815) within a musical context. The last part of this definition seems to suggest that Hwang sees *mōt* as encompassing *p’agyŏngmi* – a concept explained below. As is the case with *han*, *mōt* too has been criticized as a constructed marker of Korean exceptionality. Hence, based on a comparison to

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. the interview with the singer Yeh Chan-kun in Chapter 8.4: “... *kŭrŏk* ‘e *pullŏjwŏya kŭ masi nal kŏ aniyeyo*/... if you sing it just like that, it will not have **that flavour** to it.”

Irish history and aesthetic sensitivity, O'Rourke (1998) argues that what these terms describe are emotions and concepts close to those found in other cultures.

These are, then, the fundamental terms at the core of Korean aesthetic experience, widely seen as being part of the “Korean condition” and therefore present in all types of Korean artistic expression. They are a smorgasbord of different categories; while *him* and the present definition of *changdan* are identified as principles underlying musical activity, *han* and *hŭng* are emotions, and *mat* and *mŏt* are criteria forming the basis of aesthetic judgment.

In my discussion of a few more specific concepts not limited to music, I will start with another brief mention of the textbook given above which is used in Korean language classes at the Language Education Center of Seoul National University. While an unorthodox source, it is likely that any Korean student in middle school will find the Korean aesthetic explained in similar ways. The textbook, then, serves as a good source to illustrate the presence of a quasi-official discourse on the question that opens the lesson text: “What do Koreans find beautiful?” (Ch’oe Ŭn’gyu et al. 2012:184). In summary, this is the way the Korean aesthetic is explained to foreigners attending Korea’s leading university. I will introduce two terms as fundamental to the traditional Korean aesthetic sensitivity in general, and two more as being complementary explanations. Below I will show that all four can be discovered in some form in traditional music as well.

The first fundamental term is an adjective, *sobakhada*,<sup>24</sup> which means ‘unadorned, simple and honest, plain’. The aesthetic of *sobakham* is exemplified through *paekcha hangari*, the plain white egg-shaped type of Chosŏn-era porcelain jar which reveals a preference for the clean, unobtrusive and practical. The second term, the adjective *chayŏnsŭrŏpta*<sup>25</sup> means ‘natural’. The example chosen is Chosŏn-era woodcraft, which features the simplest possible shape and reduces artifice to a

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<sup>24</sup> 素朴 – originally/by nature – essence/simple. This term is sometimes used to describe the aesthetic of *yŏngje sijo* in contrast to other regional *sijo* styles (Yi Sora, *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, entry ‘*sijoch ’ang*’).

<sup>25</sup> 自然 – by itself – be like that.



minimum, thereby highlighting the natural beauty of the wood grain.<sup>26</sup> The complementary explanations offered are *p'agyŏngmi* and *yŏbaek*. *P'agyŏngmi*<sup>27</sup> translates as “the charm of the broken rule” and is exemplified through a green porcelain water dropper for ink, shaped like a lotus flower with a regular arrangement of petals. One of the petals, however, is curling sideways in a different shape to the others, creating an imbalance representative of *p'agyŏngmi*.<sup>28</sup> The application to musical aesthetics of *yŏbaek*, the last of the four, is immediately evident, so it is discussed below. Finally, it has to be noted that even this textbook has moved on from the simple and essentialising descriptions featured in older materials which are criticized by the likes of O'Rourke; acknowledging that Korean tastes are in a process of change, they concede that in contrast to traditional concepts some Koreans' tastes nowadays may tend towards the ‘polished<sup>29</sup> and fancy’<sup>30</sup> (Ch'oe Ŭn'gyu et al. 2012:184). Indeed, in the age of ever more individualized societies, we should be suspicious of any attempt to assign a uniform taste to a population of more than 50 million people.

Another concept indigenous to Korean aesthetics is that of *yŏbaek*,<sup>31</sup> translated as ‘spaciousness’ by Park Sung-Hee (2011:96), and which could be described as the “beauty of the empty space”. The Korean textbook here gives the example of traditional Korean paintings, pointing out how, for example, in landscape paintings spaces around the painted object are left blank: “if we look at a traditional Korean painting there are empty spaces unlike in Western paintings, so we can say that these spaces left to *yŏbaek* are an expression of an aesthetic” (Ch'oe

<sup>26</sup> The concept is mirrored in this explanation by Kim Bong-ryol on the aesthetics of “visual stability” in traditional Korean architecture: “To understand the lines of a Korean building, one should understand the heart of the carpenters and the spirit of the masters [... who] used their expertise to create structures that were not flashy; they were natural, but elegant. The improvised beauty of Korean architecture was possible only after acquisition of precise technical skills, with their naturalness being derived from accurate calculations” (in Choi Seung-beom et al 1998:26). Note that naturalness does not equal something being easy; instead aiming for naturalness takes a lot of effort.

<sup>27</sup> 破格美 – break – form – beauty.

<sup>28</sup> Kang U-bang's publication ‘The Charm of Anomaly in Korean Art’ (in Choi Seung-beom et al. 1998) presents similar examples from the realm of Shilla-era pottery.

<sup>29</sup> *Seryŏndoeda* (洗 - wash; three variants exist for the second character: 練, 鍊 and 煉. The first can be interpreted as ‘to master’, the last one as ‘to refine’ with the semantic nuance of ‘fire’ added, indicating that the refining process is somehow related to heat and forging. The second variant substitutes the radical of ‘iron’ for that of ‘fire’ and may be interpreted as falling between the other two variants in its meaning).

<sup>30</sup> *Hwaryŏhada* (華麗 – shine – be beautiful).

<sup>31</sup> 餘白 – be left over – be white.

Ŭn'gyu et al. 2012:182). The concept of *yŏbaek* is not limited to paintings, and Park Sung-Hee gives the example of a traditional Korean room in which the mattresses are rolled up and stowed away in the morning, and pillows produced for sitting on the floor when needed, applying the idea of architectural spaciousness which allows accommodation to diverse purposes (2011:97). In the musical context, the term used is *yŏŭm*<sup>32</sup> – the fading of a tone produced by plucked instruments especially, but also an imaginary continuation of a tone in the listener's mind, so that the “aftertone ... spread out when a string had been plucked, just as waves ripple outward in a pond when a stone is thrown in. [Scholars] took pleasure in the idea the *yŏŭm* was something mystical, and that it was analogous to nature” (Byung-ki Hwang 2001:813). The question is not so much whether a tone is actually heard or has already faded out completely:

The imagination is facilitated by vision. An example is found when the *geomungo* [*kŏmun'go*] player plucks one string and makes vibrato on that pitch by pulling and pushing the string over the convex fret. The sound decays quickly. However, by observing the player's hand motion in making the vibrato, the audience is led to imagine the continuation of the same kind of vibrato pattern in a diminishing pattern, although the actual sound has disappeared a moment ago (Lee Byong Won 1997:58).

Likewise, the final part of the first two *chang* of a *sijo* in which the voice falls tacet while only the instruments play is interpreted as *yŏŭm*. Although the human voice is not a plucked instrument, the change of dynamics gives a *yŏŭm* quality to the section.<sup>33</sup> Given that plucked instruments are used in all kinds of traditional Korean music, it can be said that theoretically *yŏŭm* is present in all of them and, indeed, Lee Byong Won treats *yŏŭm* as one of the fundamental characteristics of Korean music in general. In practice, however, *yŏŭm* does not play an important role in folk music, which tends to be much faster than *chŏngak*, save for, say, the slower sections

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<sup>32</sup> 餘音 – be left over – sound; the term is discussed as an aesthetic characteristic of Korean music, but as a technical description, the more general and common *yŏun* (餘韻 – be left over – grace/sound; the versatility of the second character makes possible a number of meanings, such as ‘afterglow’, ‘aftertaste’, ‘lingering imagery’ or ‘aftertone’) is also encountered.

<sup>33</sup> Something like *yŏŭm* is held as an important component especially in the aesthetic of *naep'oje sijo* (Cf. Chapter 6.3).

in *sanjo*, so it is accurate to say that *yŏŭm* is fundamental especially to the aesthetic of *chŏngak*. Similar concepts to *yŏŭm* exist in Chinese music, especially in the *qin* tradition, and in the Japanese sense of *ma*, which in music is seen as a moment before a sound (after Park Sung-Hee 2011:98). In fact, *yŏŭm* corresponds closely to the concept of Chinese *yun*, which Edward Ho describes as an aesthetic ideal across various types of Chinese literati artistic endeavour from music to poetry and painting. Ho discusses *qiyun*<sup>34</sup> as a dualistic principle with *qi* and *yun* corresponding to *yang* and *ŭm* (Chinese *yin*), respectively (1997:39). The Sino-Korean equivalent *kiun* exists but does not have currency in the aesthetic discussions of music by Korean musicologists. The following two definitions of *yun* point to an origin of the concept of Korean *yŏŭm* in the Chinese tradition of aesthetic thought. The first is given by Fan Wen from Song dynasty times, “After the strike [of a bell], the lasting resonance of the bell with its characteristic enchantment is *yun*” (Yang Jialuo n.d., p.14, cited in Ho 1997:39), and the second by Ho himself: “[Y]*un* is the residual duration of the enchanting sound or note-inflexion. For example, the application of the slide technique in *qin* or *pipa* playing conveys a variety of musical expressions and creates this sense of ‘residual feeling’” (1997:39).

Another all-encompassing feature of all traditional Korean music is ornamentation. As with *changdan* above, the distinction between ornamentation as an element of musical structure and an element of aesthetics is not clearly defined, but without doubt ornamentation is one of the concepts in terms of which Korean musical aesthetics can be discussed (for which, refer back to Chapter 1.4 above). While ornamentation is an important musical parameter in most musical traditions, not least the Western classical, Korean ornamentation has its unique idiosyncrasies. Lee Byong Won highlights the relatively greater difficulty in clearly establishing the difference between the tones constituting the melody and auxiliary ornamental tones in Korean traditional music, as opposed to the Western classical tradition, and he describes another important difference of Korean and Western ornamentation thus:

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<sup>34</sup> 氣韻 – vitality – grace and dignity.

[O]rnatmentation in Korean music [serves a] function in defining phrases within a special rhythmic context. [...In Korean ensemble music t]he individual parts are meant to be heard separately, rather than melted together in harmony as appears in Western orchestral music. During the performance, the ornamental pattern, not the metronomic beat, plays a decisive role in determining the extent of the elasticity of the rhythm and in signalling the imminent completion of the phrase (1997:57).

Park Sung-Hee (2011:100) reports that the Korean musicologist Hahn Man-young marked ornamentation out as the main element that differentiated Korean from Chinese music.<sup>35</sup> To Byung-ki Hwang, ornamentation is at the core of the above-mentioned *him* – the vitality of the individual note (2001:815). Kim Minjŏng’s assignment of sometimes contrasting aesthetic concepts to different performances in *kagŏk* singing is based in large part on different ways of ornamentation (2015:198-216). Donna Kwon, too, places ornamentation squarely at the centre of her discussion of *sijo* aesthetics and dedicates an entire chapter to this topic (1995:62-84).

Byung-ki Hwang presents the idea of a dichotomy in Korean musical genres and musical consciousness, distinguishing heteronomous from autonomous music: music “expected to express ideas, moral principles, and emotions”, in contrast to music “beautiful in itself and [...] based on the principle of *him*” (2001:816). This idea has a parallel in Western classical music, the types corresponding to the two sides of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century discussion about the superiority of programmatic music on one side and so-called absolute music on the other. This discussion became notably attached to the figures of the two composers Richard Wagner and Johannes Brahms. No such debate exists in the Korean case, owing possibly to the fact that the two types of music belonged to very different social strata of Chosŏn-era society. Unfortunately, Hwang does not elaborate further, so the application of his idea to a categorization of Korean music is difficult. Saying that Korean music is always one of the two puts it into a group with virtually all existing music, and we do not gain anything learning that something belongs to one of two categories which together cover everything. We can assume that *chŏngak* and *aak*, the musical

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<sup>35</sup> Although one of Hahn Man-young’s publications discusses the origins of Korean music (1990), no similar statement is included there, suggesting that it was a later conclusion.

genres of literati and aristocracy, that is, the middle and upper classes of Chosŏn society, fall into the heteronymous category of Korean music, which was in all cases expected to “express moral principles” but not emotions, at least not overtly. Music that can be defined as “beautiful in itself” and “based on *him*” calls to mind something as immediately expressive as *p’ungmul* percussion ensembles, although an emotion such as *hŭng* is hardly absent from *p’ungmul*. It is very hard indeed to find a strictly “absolute” genre of Korean music that does not entail some emotional content or a preoccupation to express moral principles or ideas. All in all, then, Hwang’s distinction does not neatly coincide with genre boundaries in Korean music, so in the absence of further specifications its usefulness must be considered to be limited. However, I will return to the idea of heteronomous music as a tool for self-cultivation in the following section on *chŏngak* aesthetics.

Another unique aesthetic trait of Korean music in general can be termed ‘charm in heterophony’ and refers to the layered heterophony in Korean ensemble or orchestra music. I will discuss this in the next section as *hwaibudong*, a concept used in connection with *chŏngak* that is explained in terms going beyond musical technicalities. This same distinction can be made for a number of other properties of Korean music which have been put forward as essential to the aesthetics of Korean traditional music in general, apart from everything mentioned so far: Lee Byong Won suggests rhythm (1997:59-60) and timbre (1997:50-5), and Park Sung-Hee adds vocalization techniques (2011:103-8). I regard all three as categories too general to pinpoint the Korean aesthetic in them. Rhythm can be discussed in terms of the aesthetic ideas underlying *changdan* and timbre in terms of Byung-ki Hwang’s concept of *him*, but the aesthetic relevance in vocal style on the other hand is contained in more fine-tuned analyses of ornamentation and a range of other concepts discussed below in connection to the specific aesthetic of *sijo*. In other words, rhythm, timbre and vocal style in and by themselves do not provide the aesthetic of Korean music. We see this when a student faithfully imitates the rhythm shown by the teacher, because while the student may reproduce the pattern they do not necessarily capture the aesthetic.

Aesthetic thus goes beyond the elements purely constitutive of musical structure, and is situated where we find ideas or reasons of *why* something is beautiful. Likewise, in a Bach chorale we would not argue that a technical musical detail such as a suspension or an augmented interval in the melody is beautiful in and of itself. It is only when we note that the suspension creates a dissonance which is resolved in the next step as part of a greater pattern of harmonic tension and release, or when we identify the augmented interval as a particular expressive choice within the melodic context, that we have a basis for aesthetic reasoning. Even more so when we can in the next step connect the compositional choice with the lyrics of the chorale and find that the musical choice results in something expressive of the chorale's lyrics.

Before moving on to specific aesthetic concepts found in *chŏngak*, I want to contrast the general aesthetic ideas so far with the philosophical roots of Korean aesthetics discussed in the previous section to see how they relate to each other. Although *him* is a native Korean word, the concept with its internal dynamism and ideas of dual states carries strong overtones of Chinese cosmology, in particular the oppositional forces of *ŭm/yang*. Again, if *him* is indeed the principle underlying all Korean music, it puts Korean music in line with one of the most fundamental Daoist ideas. The same goes for *changdan* as one of the forms that *him* takes in Korean music. *Han* and *hŭng* are typically regarded as native Korean concepts that do not seem to have been brought into connection with *chŏngak*'s philosophical roots, and in fact Korean musicians would reject the notion that something as idiosyncratically Korean as *han* and *hŭng* could be related to philosophical ideas with Chinese origin in any way. The same observation can be made for *mat* and *mŏt*. Indeed, Byung-ki Hwang denies that these concepts are in any way related to Chinese aesthetic theory and claims that Chinese music theory, although familiar to Chosŏn-era music theorists, was not realized in "tangible features" of Korean musical practice (1978:34). This, however, may be seen as debatable: Few Korean musicians would deny that *yŏŭm* is one kind of *mŏt* in some genres of Korean music, one of the ways, or rather ingredients to an end product endowed with *mŏt*. Yet, *yŏŭm* is undeniably a concept that has counterparts in Chinese and

Japanese music that point to a common origin. Chinese aesthetic thought may then be one of the many roads to *môt*. While the idea of *p'agyŏnggmi* does not elicit any obvious foundations in philosophy, *sobakham* and *chayŏnsŭrŏum* both bear a striking resemblance to the Daoist ideal of renouncing artifice and returning to one's true nature.

### 7.3 Aesthetic ideas and concepts in *chŏngga*

After discussing concepts and characteristics that bear on the aesthetics of all traditional Korean music, I now turn to a discussion of the more specific *chŏngak* aesthetic. Given the social context of *chŏngak* it is not surprising that the *chŏngak* aesthetic is distinct from the aesthetics of Korean genres coming from the folk music realm. These differences are owed in part to the tastes of *chŏngak* audiences and performers. These tastes were partly influenced by philosophical ideas, although it is hard to ascertain to what extent. Whether Korean folk music is rooted in some of the same philosophical foundations is a complex question and it would go beyond the scope of this topic to fully discuss it here.<sup>36</sup>

There is a tendency for Korean commentators on the matter to discuss Korean aesthetics wholesale, and to give primacy to folk music. This may reflect the general tendency in contemporary Korea to promote the latter as “the true Korean traditional music,” perhaps because of its native roots in contrast to the Chinese influence in Korean elite culture, or perhaps because it is perceived as being more spectacular.<sup>37</sup> This may explain how the chapter on styles and aesthetics in a publication revised in 2006 starts with the baffling sentence, “The most important aspect of style in Korean music is the flexibility which permits personal deviation, variation, and improvisation in the process of performance” (Lee Byong Won 2006:32). The fact that Lee continues with a lengthy discussion on *sinawi*, an improvisatory ensemble folk genre,

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<sup>36</sup> Keith Howard tends to disregard the view that philosophic ideas embodied in the aesthetic of an elite “trickle down” into the folk realm (personal communication, April 2016). Yet, as I have discussed above, the concept of *yŏŭm* has parallels in the Chinese concept of *yun* which in turn is rooted in cosmological ideas about configured energy. The fact that *yŏŭm* features in Korean *sanjo*, a folk genre developed by musicians familiar with *chŏngak*, indicates that there are cases in which ideas from the great philosophical traditions do find their way into the folk realm.

<sup>37</sup> The latter has been suggested by Kim Yŏnggi, property holder for *kagok* (personal communication, August 2015).

apparently confirms a certain folk bias. He goes on to write that “both *classical* and folk musicians of Korea have been accustomed to considerable freedom in performance” (2006:33 my emphasis), yet “the austerities of Confucian prescription limited the extent of variation and improvisation in classical Korean traditional music” (2006:34). Finally, he specifies that the greater tendency to improvisation in Korean music in comparison to other Asian musics lies in “a certain degree of freedom when interpreting rhythmic nuances and embellishing the basic melody” (2006:34). Lee’s statements hinge on a very broad definition of improvisation, with considerable freedom in a genre like *sinawi*, while in other contexts variation or ornamentation would be more accurate terms. Improvisation almost certainly played a greater role in *chŏngak* during the Chosŏn dynasty than it does today. Song Chi Won, for instance, argues for the *Yŏngsan hoesang* suite to be seen as a communicative process and effectively a form of improvisation (2012). If we take into account the reading of *sijo*’s Sino-Korean characters as ‘tunes of the time’ in the sense of ‘extemporized tunes’ and its one-time status as a genre with space for modifications in which singers introduced their own changes to the known texts – the manifold variants of many texts are proof of this – this lets us conclude that improvisation and some degree of freedom were once a part of the *chŏngak* aesthetic. The same does not hold true nowadays, however, as I have shown in Chapter 4.3, where a concession made to a student to find his own style does not equal an encouragement to improvisation. On the contrary, most of my teachers pointed out that *chŏngga* teachers tend to disapprove of any changes students make to pieces in the repertoire.

The most fundamental term in the discussion of *chŏngak* aesthetics is *p’ungnyu*.<sup>38</sup> Literally meaning ‘wind and stream’, it denotes elegance and taste and was in its most general meaning just a word scholars used for music, in parallel with the term *p’ungwŏl*<sup>39</sup> ‘wind and moon’ used for poetry (Byung-ki Hwang 2001:813). In one of its more specific meanings it refers to the instrumental *chŏngak* tradition, where it is combined with qualifying affixes to denominate the different instrumentations in the canon. It is also applied more broadly to all *chŏngak*, subsuming

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<sup>38</sup> 風流 – wind – flow/stream.

<sup>39</sup> 風月 – wind – moon.



all the “music of the *p’ungnyubang*” (Kim Hee-sun 2007:49). But *p’ungnyu*’s meaning is not limited to the music itself. *P’ungnyu* denotes a lifestyle that emphasizes the shunning of worldly matters in favour of what in Western terms can be described as humanist pleasures, such as music, poetry, wine, and the company of friends and female entertainers. Accordingly, Park Sung-Hee glosses *p’ungnyu* as “refined pastimes” (2011:92). Given that politics in Chosŏn times were highly factionalized, *p’ungnyu* may denote the decision to no longer participate in the intrigues that the political life of Chosŏn was fraught with from the first moment and that frequently led to bloody purges of entire factions of scholars. Withdrawal from the related machinations, consequent renouncement of ambition, and pursuit of a less complicated life all had merit as the decision of a righteous Confucian scholar, so that even if the *p’ungnyu* lifestyle has a hedonistic ring to it, it is a hedonism sublimated through the cultural refinement and sophistication that *p’ungnyu* entailed.

The epitaph of the *hwarang*<sup>40</sup> Nannang by Silla-era scholar Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn, cited by both Kim Hee-sun and Hwang Joon-yon (1993:67) shows that in Silla times *p’ungnyu* was understood as a native Korean amalgam of the three great philosophical traditions:

There is a wonderful and mysterious way in the country, called *Pungnyu*. The origins of the institution are detailed in Seonsa. In fact it embraces the Three Teachings [Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism] and transforms myriad men. It is a tenet of Confucius that one should be filial to one’s parents and loyal to one’s sovereign; it is the belief of Laozi that one should be at home in the action of inaction and practice the wordless doctrine; and it is the teaching of Buddha that one should avoid evil and do many good deeds (quotationd in Kim Hee-sun 2007:49-50).

However, Kim Hee-sun points out that the artistic and cultural practice of the way of *p’ungnyu* by the *hwarang* elite of Silla times, “was steeped in Buddhism and Taoism” (2007:50). The spirit of *p’ungnyu* during late Chosŏn times is described in the following way by Park Sung-Hee:

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<sup>40</sup> Literally “flower boy”, elite during Silla times, often rendered as ‘knight’ in English, although later research suggests there is little evidence that *hwarang* were necessarily military men (Pratt and Rutt 1999:178; see also Rutt 2008:136-7).

[T]he word *pungnyu* came to be used primarily in connection with music, particularly those forms deemed to cultivate good character. In this period, certain genres are repeatedly associated with *pungnyu*, including the three song forms: classical lyric song (*gagok*), sung short poems (*shijo*), and narrative song (*gasa*). Music was at the center of the *pungnyu* life and enjoyed alongside poetry, dancing, nature, tea and wine – all of which were to be shared with like-minded companions in the context of private parties (Park Sung-Hee 2012:33-4).

In summary, we can interpret *p'ungnyu* as a lifestyle or a set of activities associated with the *hwarang* during Silla times and the literati during Chosŏn times, and that the understanding of the lifestyle or activities that the term encapsulated varied substantially according to the prevailing philosophical current of each period, with a greater focus on Daoist and Buddhist ideas during the earlier, and a greater focus on Confucian ideas during the later, period of its existence. This suggests that the *p'ungnyu* we associate in the musical context is that from Chosŏn times and that any link to the previous connotations of *p'ungnyu* is weak. The *p'ungnyu* lifestyle cannot be translated directly into an aesthetic, and no writings on the matter attempt to do so. *P'ungnyu* is not a performance prescription, rather the opposite: it is put forward as a descriptive rationale for a musical aesthetic, but as such it cannot be pinpointed in musical parameters of performance practice. Nowadays then, *p'ungnyu* comes closest in its function to an extra-musical idea that helps musicians find the proper spirit for performance and listeners the proper lens through which to make sense of the music.

To return to the idea of heteronomous music, Hwang Junyon's research (1999) cites an interesting case of the application of the idea of music as a tool for self-cultivation to musical practice. In the oldest extant documentation, a number of pieces in the *chŏngak* canon, notably the instrumental suite *Yŏngsan hoesang*, but also pieces that went on to form part of the *kagok* canon, used the *kyemyŏnjo* mode which is widely considered as creating a sorrowful expression. Since sorrow was not a condition that the Confucian scholar aspired to, a change in musical performance practice can be observed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which the scale steps responsible for creating *kyemyŏnjo*'s sorrowful mood were adjusted in later notations and the

pieces were no longer preceded by performance indications prescribing a sorrowful mood. These adjustments were likely made on the basis of theoretical considerations.

The aesthetic idea of ‘charm in heterophony’ was mentioned above. The concept of *hwaibudong* appears as the relevant manifestation of this idea in the context of *chŏngak*. A publication by Yi Chisŏn (2007) thus contrasts the aesthetic of *chŏngak* (to be precise, *kagok* and *chulp’ungnyu*, one of the instrumentation variants in the instrumental *chŏngak* repertoire) with that of Japanese *sankyoku*, and discovers a range of parallels which allow for *sankyoku* to be seen as a counterpart of sorts to these Korean genres. On one level of this comparison, the aesthetic ideal of *chulp’ungnyu* and *kagok* is conceptualized through the term *hwaibudong*, the similarities of which to the ideal of *hwa*<sup>41</sup> in *sankyoku* can then be established. The fact that one of my teachers in interview about the *sijo* aesthetic likewise used the term *hwaibudong* in relation to *kagok* warrants a closer inspection of this term as a concept for *chŏngga*.<sup>42</sup> This inspection may also serve as a case study of how a Classical Chinese idiom has become isolated from its original context and integrated into the aesthetic vocabulary. The meaning that the on-line Naver thesaurus gives for *hwaibudong*<sup>43</sup> in everyday usage is, “keeping a good relationship with others without following mindlessly”. The original source of this four-letter idiom is book 13, chapter 23 in the *Analects*, one of the classics containing the teachings of Confucius. Legge (1861) translates the complete quotation<sup>44</sup> as, “The superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean man is adulatory, but not affable”, whereas a German translation I have consulted (Wilhelm 2008[1910]:409) can be

<sup>41</sup> 和 – to be in harmony. In Japanese, the term is pronounced as ‘wa’.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the interview with the singer Yi Sŏngyun in Chapter 8.2: “*Ige nora* *rŭl purŭnŭn sarami noraeman purŭnŭn ke anira hwaibudongch* ‘*ŏrŏm sŏroga tarŭjiman ok ’esŭt ’ura yŏnjuch* ‘*ŏrŏm hwahabi twaesŏ arŭmdaun* <harmony> *rŭl maennŭn kŏtch* ‘*ŏrŏmuri noraega panjurang changdanirang kŭ taŭme kŭ hohŭbirang irŏn kŏttŭl sŏro chugŏni pakkŏni sot’ong ŭl* <communication> *ŭl hajanhayo*. So, now the singer has to not only sing the song, but, like in an orchestra performance, be in accord with the other parts that differ from his own, as they say: “**be in tune with others without losing yourself**”. As when you are creating a beautiful harmony, in our song we converse back and forth, matching our breath with the instrumental accompaniment and the rhythm cycles, forming communication.”

<sup>43</sup> 和而不同, harmony – while doing/but – not – the same.

<sup>44</sup> *Kunja hwaibudong soin tongibuhwa* (君子而不同 小人同而不和 – king – son (=virtuous man), harmony – while doing/but – not – the same, small – man (=ignorant and vulgar man), the same – while doing/but – not – harmony)

rendered as “The noble is peaceful, but does not make himself mean. The ignoble makes himself mean, but is not peaceful”, and adds the following interpretative commentary:

It is a sign of spiritual distinction to complement each other's nature in a harmonic way when treating with others, though without ever crossing the fine line of a reserved restraint.<sup>45</sup> The men of the masses are intimate everywhere at all times, though without being able to achieve real harmony in their treatment with others.

At first glance, the music-related usage of this idiom takes it out of context. Alternatively, we can argue that the charm of Classical Chinese is precisely that it can be re-interpreted in a new context. Another interpretation is possible, though. In this, keeping in mind the greater degree of flexibility and spontaneity in *chōngak* argued for by Song Chi Won (2012), who interprets *chōngak* as a communicative process, the original meaning can be kept intact so that *hwaibudong* would be a reminder to maintain decorum and not become too obtrusive in one's musical communication. It is more likely, however, that this idiom has been re-interpreted, because it fits one of the classical musical ideals so well. *Hwaibudong* just like the ideal of *hwa*<sup>46</sup> in *sankyoku*, would then both correspond to the concept of *he*,<sup>47</sup> a term in Chinese aesthetic terminology central both to Confucian and Daoist thought which De Woskin (2001:97-8) defines like this:

[The notion of] consonant coexistence of separate and distinct elements that remain apprehensible as individual elements but are more pleasingly apprehended in their combinations. For Confucius, ‘he’ illustrated ideal social interactions, in which individuals through cultivation and skill in ritual could freely express their will without dissonant transgression against others in the society. Confucius is believed to have danced with his disciples in order to illustrate social order without visible means of coercion. For the Daoists, ‘he’ represents an alignment of fundamental forces among diverse elements in nature: the whistling of the wind through branches and hollows of trees; the gurgling and rushing

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<sup>45</sup> The tautology ‘reserved restraint’ appears in the same way in the German original.

<sup>46</sup> The character used in Japanese is the same as the Korean *hwa* in *hwaibudong*.

<sup>47</sup> This term is just the Chinese pronunciation of the same *hwa*.

of waters; the calls, cries, and whistles of birds and beasts. Individuals, through cultivation, can take their seat in what is called the great harmony or great symphony of nature.

A return to Yi Chisŏn's work confirms this idea. She refers to two musicologists who have died in recent years, Ch'oe Chongmin and Yi Sŏngch'ŏn, as having been the first to apply *hwaibudong* to the musical context and to claim that it "expresses the Korean musical consciousness" (2007:252), but she does not give specific sources.<sup>48</sup> Rather, she acknowledges that it is originally "a philosophical idiom" used to explain Korean music. Drawing on Yi Sŏngch'ŏn, one of the arguments in her discussion of *hwaibudong* (and *hwa* in *sankyoku*) is that the concept contrasts the "system of command" found in Western music with its conductors, and denotes an equality between ensemble members in which all players contribute their own variant of the main melody.<sup>49</sup>

All things considered, *hwaibudong* is a useful concept to describe *chŏngga*. Although it fits *kagok* with its prescribed assortment of instruments and fixed accompaniment best, and it is no coincidence that my teacher Yi Sŏngyun used it in the context of discussing *kagok*, the *susŏng*<sup>50</sup> *karak* accompaniment, that is the way that instruments mirror the sung melody in *kasa* and, frequently, *sijo*, likewise consists of variants of the main melody in accordance with the idiosyncratic ornaments possible and particular to each instrument which are brought into harmony. Comparing *hwaibudong* with the other aesthetic concepts discussed here, the philosophical dimension is especially eminent, both as a Confucian ideal – being, after all, purportedly the words of Confucius himself – and as an approximation to the Daoist ideal of *he* that is present in Chinese musical philosophy.

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<sup>48</sup> The subject index of Ch'oe Chongmin's comprehensive tome on aesthetical thought in Korean music, *Han'guk chŏnt'ong ūmak ūi mihak sasang* (2003), does not contain the term.

<sup>49</sup> It can be argued that this statement fails to take into account Western classical chamber music. In a Brahms piano trio, for example, none of the three instruments plays the proverbial second fiddle. Instead all get their turn for the piece's main theme. The idea of 'subordination' is more convincing if she is referring to harmonic subordination which is absent from the heterophonic textures of Korean *chŏngak*. Due to the bass line's preeminence in determining the harmonic progression in Western classical music, and the respective ranges of the instruments in a piano trio, the violin will, indeed, never assume the function of "harmonically grounding" a melody played by the violoncello, whatever this means for a perceived hierarchy between the instruments (does the melody or the harmonic fundament "command" the piece?). In summary, it is not a felicitous comparison.

<sup>50</sup> 隨聲 – follow – sound.

Just as *hwaibudong* is a fairly specific concept, a concept with an immediately observable musical translation (or maybe the opposite, an immediately observable musical behaviour translated into a concept), there are a number of other aesthetic abstractions that can be observed. *P'agyŏngmi*, mentioned above, is a good example of such an abstraction: An aesthetic feature is observed, ideally in a number of instances, and given a name. Many other such concepts or specific types of *mi* are put forward in the realm of Korean music. *Mĩ*<sup>51</sup> is the Sino-Korean word for beauty and is typically suffixed to a two-character word to denote a specific kind of aesthetic ideal. Kim Minjŏng notes that certain overlap occurs between different types of *mi*:

Not only have lively debates on the evaluation criteria of such aesthetic vocabulary been led in the academic art world from early on [...] But in the *kugak* world, too, such lively debates have developed as different commentators have presented their perspectives and criteria on the aesthetics of Korean traditional music and at the same time found classifications for diverse types of *mi* (2015:204).

So far I have established aesthetic concepts first in Korean traditional music in general, and second in *chŏngak*. A finer brush is needed for an analysis of the aesthetic differences between the three genres of *chŏngga*. In fact, Chapter 8, which draws on interviews with contemporary *chŏngga* singers, tries to establish exactly how today's singers conceptualize the aesthetic differences between these three genres when the three are closely associated in so many ways. A 2007 publication by the Korean National Gugak Center provides a first glimpse of the terms through which the differences between the genres of *chŏngga* are commonly articulated. According to the publication's author, the Liverpool-based scholar Um Hae-kyung,

[t]he beauty of *gagok* lies in the majestic and elegant quality expressed through a combination of the poetic texts, melismatic melody and refined vocal techniques. This classical musical genre was highly stylised in terms of both its composition and performance structure. As its other name *manyeonjanghwanjigok* (song of ten-thousand-year joy) suggests, *gagok* represents the aesthetic essence of

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<sup>51</sup> 美.

Korean high culture established by the aristocracy and literati between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (2007:38).

*Kasa* on the other hand “has both the elegance of the classical songs delineated by its fluid melody and the expressiveness of folk songs through falsetto, dynamics and wide range of vibrato” (2007:41). In summary, the assessment in these statements implies a hierarchy: With *kagok* established as the “the aesthetic essence of Korean high culture”, the other genres cannot compete with it in the same categories, so their charm is discovered through applying other terms. *Kasa* occupies a middle position combining the best of two worlds in one genre, namely all the refined techniques present in the other *chŏngak* genres, but also folk music techniques and ways of executing modes that would have been considered vulgar in the other *chŏngak* genres. Finally, *sijo* cannot compete in terms of melody or expressive vocal technique; its charm is therefore to be defined in ways that mirror the following widespread common-sense evaluation. So, we read in the same publication:

*Sijo* is widely performed amongst amateur singers as it does not necessarily require professional vocal training or an instrumental accompaniment. It is also simpler in form and melody when compared to other classical vocal genres. The essence of *sijo* singing is in its subtle gradation of dynamics and directional vibrato contrasted by falsetto ornamentations that allow singers to express their individuality and regional styles through artistic control of these techniques (2007:46)

In Chapter 8, I will return to the topic of such comparative assessments, as my interviews show that it is all but impossible to discuss *sijo*’s aesthetics without contrasting them with those of *kasa* and especially *kagok*. The latter comparison is especially evident as *kagok* and *sijo* use the same *sijo* texts, so different musical settings of one and the same text can be compared with attention to the finest details such as the rendering of individual phrases in one and the other.

#### 7.4 Aesthetic ideas and concepts in *sijo*

Blowing in the pine grove over my head, the wind rushed by in a crescendo, followed by a decrescendo as the wind died away; after straining, the pine needles shook back in a kind of tremolo, giving a very settled sound. The delicate variations in sound made by the pine trees varied with the force of the wind blowing in and passing out. The long, drawn-out sounds of the wind blowing through the pine grove could hardly be said to have melody or rhythm; what gave the sense of beauty could only be the dynamics, that is, the changes in power. Like the wind in the pines, *sijo* has no harmony, little rhythm, and a simple melody; the sense of pleasure in hearing *sijo* is aroused by the variations in dynamics. Dynamic change is the most vital element in *sijo* performance and produces its elegance (Lee Hye-ku 1983:157-8).

This comparison of the *sijo* aesthetic with nature comes from the “father of Korean musicology” Lee Hye-ku, specifically a writing called the “Appreciation of *Sijo*,” published in 1957 in Korean, and here cited in the English translation by Robert Provine. This description defines *sijo*’s aesthetics in a way that can seem almost esoteric by likening *sijo* to the blowing of the wind, and coincides almost exactly with the musical aesthetic ideal in Daoist thinking. Daoism, likewise, presents an aesthetic devoid of artifice that helps in returning the individual to his/her true nature. Lee Hye-ku’s article was the first scholarly writing on *sijo* aesthetics, and remains the most compelling analysis of its subject, rooted in not only his deep familiarity dating back to times when *sijo* was still a popular song unfettered by institutionalization, but also in the scope of his humanist erudition in general. Pinpointing the *sijo* aesthetic in its subtle dynamic shading is entirely convincing to anyone who has ever heard a *sijo* being performed. Yet, a limited number of more recent writings have contributed additional approaches to the aesthetic which are not mutually exclusive and have their own merit. Unlike Lee, both Kim Young-Uk (2013) and Shin Woong-Soon (2015) place greater emphasis on the words in *sijo*. While the former situates *sijo*’s aesthetic in the way the meaning of the text is emulated in the pitch movement of singing, the latter argues from a literary perspective for an inherent musicality in *sijo* texts’ sense structure and observes that where modern texts do not observe this pattern they cannot sensibly be sung, and



so do away with one of the most distinctive features of sijo. The only specific English-language discussion of sijo's musical aesthetic is an MA thesis by Donna Kwon (1995) and takes a similar line to Lee Hye-ku, situating the aesthetic chiefly in dynamics. Kwon's analysis divides different moments along the continuum of a sijo performance into static and dynamic states which she sees as congruent with *chŏngjungdong* (stillness in motion) and *tongjungdong* (motion in motion), concepts crucial in the study of Korean dance. Zooming in further, she identifies a tension and release dynamic within the ornamentation of sijo which she grounds in her musical analysis and typology of ornaments. Although Kwon does not discuss Chinese cosmology, she interprets tension and release as *ŭm/yang* binary forces, establishing a link between musical practice and extramusical ideas of configured energy.

At the most general level, Kwon sees sijo's aesthetic as one expressing restraint. Pak Sŏk, a literature scholar specializing in Classical Chinese, proposes the concept of *taegyoyakechol*<sup>52</sup> as an approach to the aesthetic (2010). The term, originally appearing in Laozi's *Daodejing*, is a Daoist understatement of sorts, "to appear clumsy while in fact being highly skilled", and, according to Pak, it is commonly interpreted as an ideal of shunning artifice in favour of plainness. Yet, he argues that the phrase is better understood as "refined plainness", an ideal of "plainness achieved through effort". Pak adds that although the idiom does not indicate an aesthetic concept in its original meaning, it has been interpreted in such a sense by later commentators and has had considerable influence on East Asian culture in general, with sijo among all musical genres in existence exemplifying its aesthetic best. However we look at it, the Daoist roots of the idea are evident.

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<sup>52</sup> 大巧若拙 – excellent – skillful – seem like – dull/clumsy.

## Chapter 8. The musical aesthetic of sijo:

### Contemporary singers' views

#### Introduction

After looking at the philosophical foundations of sijo's musical aesthetic and surveying academic writings on aesthetics in Korean traditional music, this section draws on my fieldwork to portray how present-day performers of *chōngga* conceptualize sijo's musical aesthetic. It is evident that the aesthetic is quite similar to that of *kagok* and *kasa*, particularly when viewed next to other types of Korean traditional music, especially the manifold types of folk music with their contrasting aesthetic approaches. With my interviews, I was nevertheless interested to ascertain whether my teachers could put their finger on specific aesthetic differences between sijo and the other *chōngga* genres, or in other words, whether they believed that sijo had something unique that the other genres did not. The answers I received should be considered more impressionistic and offhand, and less holistic, than academic writings on the topic, partly because my teachers did not know beforehand the topic of my questions.

There is a long record of ethnomusicologists cautioning about applying Western aesthetic ideas, or even Western ideas of talking about aesthetics, to foreign cultures. Merriam (1964: 259–73) points out a number of factors that the Western conception of aesthetics comprises, pointing out that insight about the aesthetic found in a musical style derives from the aesthetic views of its practitioners, rather than from the listeners. Bohlman (1999: 30–31), meanwhile, shows that beauty in itself cannot be taken for granted as the purpose of every music, and that there are types of music which are so completely defined through their function that the concept of beauty cannot be applied sensibly. Finally, Howard (2015b:108) draws on Mantle Hood to explain that in

his *changgo* hourglass drum learning in Korea, teaching occurred through imitation of the teacher, without the need or, indeed, possibility of aesthetic verbalization.

The same likely held true for *chŏngga* teaching in the past, as is evidenced by the lack of a widespread aesthetic discourse on *chŏngga* in older sources. Certainly, though, *chŏngga*'s sole purpose of existence was beauty, and to achieve this, its performers have always had an aesthetic sense. So, my interviews show that performers do have ideas about the aesthetic of their song, but these ideas may have rarely been verbalized before and, as Yeh Chan-kun expressly points out (see below), may constitute conclusions by the singers themselves rather than part of an aesthetic discourse transmitted by their teachers.

None of this detracts from the weight of the answers I received and the central position they hold in my account. Among the many voices, it is only logical that singers should have the last word for now, as it is the present-day practitioners of *chŏngga*, virtually all of whom are not only singers, but teachers as well, who are shaping the aesthetic experience of *sijo* for contemporary listeners. Nowadays, it is expected from Western classical musicians of a certain order that they are not only executing the technical skills they have mastered, but are also experts on the meaning of their musical tradition, having reflected on it and come to certain conclusions.<sup>1</sup> The same holds true for contemporary *chŏngga* singers, and their answers typically reflect meticulous study on the historical details of their songs, whether it is through actual academic research, writings on the topic, university classes, or just what has been passed down to them from their teachers. Every singer I have met is therefore in a sense – sometimes a quite literal one – also a scholar of *chŏngga*. Their answers to my questions were quite varied and at times they seem in disagreement with each other. It is evident that some of my teachers had never before thought about exactly

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<sup>1</sup> It would lead too far here to review academic discussions on Western classical music criticism; the presence of this sort of discourse can be confirmed by even just a cursory glance at almost any classical concert programme or magazine. For example, in a CD review for the February 2016 issue of *Concerti*, a concert and opera magazine for the city of Hamburg, Frank Armbruster writes how 22-year-old pianist Beatrice Rana, “brings the necessary rigour and rhythmic conciseness to the Prokofiev [piano concerto No. 2], but no less a sensibility for the icy *Weltverlorenheit* (approx.: “being lost in the anonymity of the world”) of the slower sections. Her Tchaikovsky [piano concerto No. 1], too, can stand comparison. She plays this perennial favourite with feeling, but never sentimentally, in a svelte and taut way devoid of technical shortcomings” (2016:34). Clearly, just playing the right notes will not be enough anytime soon.

the question I asked about what made *sijo* different from the other genres in an aesthetical sense, because some of the answers appeared extemporized and not like the neatly arranged narratives that are the result of answering or thinking about the same question for a long time.

Apparently, my questions were not really as straightforward to the Korean mind as I would have expected. As we have seen, there are traditional categories of aesthetic thinking in Korean music, but it is possible some of my teachers had never analytically approached their music from this direction. Somewhat surprisingly then, the answers sometimes drifted to related questions about the respective difficulty of the three *chōngga* genres. This in itself reveals something interesting about the Korean conception of aesthetics: is respective difficulty really a related question? I will come back to this question in the third section of this chapter. In many cases, singers drew on *kagok* as a point of comparison, specifying *sijo*'s unique aesthetic in opposition to *kagok* in what is an obvious thing to do if we bear in mind that the same *sijo* text is often present in sung *sijo* and *kagok* incarnations. I have elected to present the answers to my questions on aesthetics in their entirety, despite the fact that in the course of an often more than one-hour interview people do not speak in a way that is fit for printing, especially when they are pondering answers while speaking. But I believe this is too delicate a topic to give roundabout summaries of my teachers' answers, since this would mean assuming that I know what the main gist of my teachers' answers is. Instead I provide an unaltered account and leave it to the reader to decide whether he/she agrees with my conclusions and observations. Although it may seem cumbersome, I also include my questions. The way in which my teachers sometimes struggled or seem to be pushed off-topic is highly revealing, and it could be argued that research interviews which fall into place and form neatly arranged narratives should be regarded as suspicious.

As the language of aesthetic can be metaphoric, I have had to take measures for clarification. Some teachers deliberately tried to use English terms in their explanation, and while it would be easiest to interpret this as a concession to me as a non-Korean researcher,<sup>2</sup> it is plausible that my

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<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the interspersed English words and terms were often the hardest parts to understand, for the ear is not expecting them.

teachers would have used these same words before a Korean researcher,<sup>3</sup> either because they could not find Korean words that better expressed a particular concept, or as part of an attempt to create a link to Western academic discourse. It is therefore relevant to distinguish English words which my teachers explicitly used from the English translations made by me, and accordingly I have marked words that appeared in English in the original interview in bold font. A related difficulty concerns words referring to concepts that have no simple equivalent in English, as well as *sajasŏngŏ* – four-character idioms. These idioms, which can be seen as sayings or in some cases even proverbs, take their meaning from a juxtaposition of four Sino-Korean characters and are commonly used in China and Japan as well as in Korea.<sup>4</sup> Four-character idioms exist for a huge range of situations and areas, including expressions of philosophical ideas, with those pertaining to Confucianism being central. To enhance readability, I have chosen to render four character idioms as well as other terms referring to concepts with no easy equivalent in English as well as I can, and to include footnotes that detail the Korean expression or Sino-Korean characters as a reference for East Asian readers or readers with proficiency in Sino-Korean characters, followed by a more detailed explanation of the expression. In the interviews, brackets are used to indicate non-verbal components of the interview important to understanding the flow of the conversation, such as pauses.

## 8.1 Moon Hyun

Moon Hyun [Mun Hyŏn] (b.1958) was my *sijo* singing teacher in Korea. Keith Howard established my contact with Moon before I arrived in Korea for my fieldwork period, and I met him personally for the first time in September 2014 at a thanksgiving (*ch'usŏk*) party on the slopes of Seoul's scenic Pukhan Mountain. During the following winter, I saw him regularly for *sijo*

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<sup>3</sup> Likewise, it is not unusual to find English words in Korean academic texts, used for words or concepts for which it is hard to find an exact equivalent in Korean (see for example Kim Chin-Woo 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Just as many proverbs in European cultures have translations throughout several languages, there is a great amount of overlap between the four-character idioms used in China, Japan and Korea, obviously with a different pronunciation in each country. Each country has its own group of four-character idioms as well, whether it is because these idioms fell into disuse in the other countries, or because they never took root there in the first place. Four-character idioms mostly originate in the Chinese classics, but there may be some new coinages.

classes and attended several of his concerts. Moon is a disciple of the last *kasa* property holder Yi Yang-gyo (who currently has honorary holder status), and has *isuja* status – the completion of transmission training – in *kasa* and the court ritual *Chongmyo cheryeak*. He is a leading member (*chido tannŏn*) of the National Gugak Center’s *chŏngga* department, and regularly featured in concerts there and in other places. Like all *chŏngga* singers, he is proficient in all kinds of *chŏngga*, but his doctoral research in musicology at the Academy of Korean Studies and a number of his publications deal specifically with *sijo*. It is therefore accurate to see him as not only a singer, but also as a *sijo* scholar and specialist.<sup>5</sup> While I regularly spoke to Moon and learned most of what I know about *sijo* performance practice from him, the following excerpt is from an interview in which I spoke to him in front of the National Gugak Center before one of his concerts on 15 August 2015. The interview had been going on for almost an hour, so the following excerpt was riddled with a few misunderstandings at first.

Q: What do you think are the most important aesthetic characteristics of *chŏngga* and especially *sijo*?

A: *Sijo*’s characteristics?

Q: Of *chŏngga* as a whole, or *sijo* in particular.

A: Well actually the three are all similar. So what I call *chŏngga*... do you ask about the musical characteristics?

Q: I meant the aesthetic characteristics.

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<sup>5</sup> In his personal blog he introduces himself as a ‘*sijo* singer’ and this confused me at first as it seemed to suggest he sang only *sijo* (<http://singerkr.blog.me/> (accessed 18 February 2016)). Some of his publications which I have surveyed treat topics that include the different regional *sasŏl* *sijo* versions in old recordings (published in 1996), *chŏngga* in elementary, middle and high school textbooks (1999), an overview of research on sung *sijo* (2001), and different *sijo* styles and their genealogy (2015).

A: Haha (laughs).<sup>6</sup>

(Pause)

Q: For example in comparison to other genres of traditional Korean music.

A: (After some pause:) Well, *chǒngga*, too ... now, the way I see it, you can observe the same musical characteristics in *chǒngga* as in instrumental *chǒngak*; and the same aesthetic concepts as in *chǒngak*. In fact, as you know, through the slow breathing<sup>7</sup> and the **melody line** that does not go back and forth between a lot of different pitches, but uses just a couple of pitches that extend on and on... (pauses)

Q: What is your personal opinion?<sup>8</sup>

A: No, that's what I mean; this music, through these – what we call musical characteristics... (pauses). Though I don't know how I should say this...

Q: I meant the aesthetic characteristics.

A: Wouldn't it have been a kind of contemplative music for yourself? They called this “music of moral cultivation”, yes moral cultivation,<sup>9</sup> music that cleanses our body and puts our

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<sup>6</sup> In the context of the conversation, it is evident Moon thought of this as a tricky question that needed some pondering.

<sup>7</sup> *Hohŭp*, the right method of breathing, is a fundamental concept across all kinds of Korean music, for which see Howard (2006a:28-9, 35).

<sup>8</sup> This question may seem a bit incoherent in translation, but at that moment it seemed that Moon Hyun was misunderstanding my question as being related to musical characteristics, and hence was more difficult than it actually was.

mind at ease. So the fact that people in the old Chosŏn times enjoyed this kind of music – well, saying “enjoyed” is a bit strange – the reason why people saw such music as important, next to studying, is that when people just wanted to enjoy themselves... you know that’s why; something like **leisure time**: Because people wanted to get away a bit from something that would needlessly make them feel **complicated** and **not calm**<sup>10</sup> even in their **leisure time**, and because they always wanted to master their emotions,<sup>11</sup> that’s why as the music for their **leisure time**, too, they enjoyed such music in *chŏnggak* style that lets you have control of yourself. So, *chŏngga* or *chŏnggak* were made as a musical means to such an end, and seeing as how they have been transmitted to the present day, I would see this as the musical characteristic.<sup>12</sup> Haha (laughs).

In his answers Moon connects *chŏngga*’s aesthetic with a twofold purpose. In one sense, music contrasts and is a necessary counterweight to daily life, given that people in Chosŏn times perceived many aspects of their life and times as complicated and not calm, so they were not inclined to put up with something having these characteristics in their leisure time, too. In a second sense, the music is not something radically different from everyday life, but just an extension of the entire Confucian educational project. There are no breaks from the quest for self-control and the suggestion of *chŏngga* practice as idle recreation for one’s leisure time would have evoked the same reaction of alienation from a Confucian scholar as inquiries in America about philosopher and Frankfurt School founder Theodor Adorno’s “hobbies”.<sup>13</sup> Moon explains

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<sup>9</sup> *Susinjega* (修身齊家 – cleanse – body – even/regular – household = “cleansing one’s body and (consequently) having a harmonious household”), can be succeeded by (*susinjega*)-*ch’igukchibon* (治國之本 – reign – country – of/sth’s – foundation = “is the foundation of ruling the country”).

<sup>10</sup> These adjectives which, as indicated through the bold font, were English terms used by Moon, unavoidably seem a bit strange in this context.

<sup>11</sup> *Maŭmŭl tasŭrida*; an expression associated with self-control and the transcendence of one’s base instincts, as achieved through meditation.

<sup>12</sup> In the context of the preceding paragraph, I interpret this as a slip of tongue; Moon must see the philosophy he just outlined as an ‘aesthetic characteristic’.

<sup>13</sup> “I am shocked by the question when I come up against it. I have no hobby. Not that I am the kind of workaholic, who is incapable of doing anything with his time but applying himself industriously to the required task. But, as far as my activities beyond the bounds of my recognised profession are concerned, I take them all, without exception, very seriously. So much so, that I should be horrified by the very idea that they had anything



the *chŏngga* aesthetic through an essentially Confucian lens, so it is no coincidence that he uses the term *susinjega*, since in two variants complemented by an additional phrase, it is a popular idiom that summarizes the meaning of a longer passage from *The Great Learning*, attributed to Confucius, about how the proper order has to be established in the smallest unit for greater order, and finally, ultimate harmony to be achieved.

## 8.2 Yi Sŏngyun

Yi Sŏngyun<sup>14</sup> has been the main *chŏngga* teacher at the Gugak National High School since around 1990 and is an *isuja* of *kagok*. She started her studies at the *Kugaksa yangsŏngso* and continued at the Gugak National High School after it was founded. Later she graduated from the *kugak* department of Chugye University of the Arts and studied music education at Dankook University. She learned *chŏngga* mostly from Kim Wŏlha, but also from Chŏn Hyojun and Kim Kyŏngbae. She is the auditor of the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture, and has lectured in *kugak* at Dankook University. I met her once before, in 2014 when I witnessed a *chŏngga* class that is discussed in Chapter 5.6, but the following excerpt is from an interview I conducted with her at the Gugak National High School on 19 August 2015.

Q: What do you consider the most important aesthetic characteristics of *chŏngga*, and in particular *sijo*?

A: As I just said, those things ... well, actually what we mean by *chŏngga* and the fact that you have to be expressing joy<sup>15</sup>... but can't ... joy itself ... Or when you are feeling really **upset**

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to do with hobbies – preoccupations with which I had become mindlessly infatuated merely in order to kill time – had I not become hardened by experience to such examples of this now widespread barbarous mentality. Making music, listening to music, reading with all my attention, these activities are part and parcel of my life; to call them hobbies would make a mockery of them” (Adorno 1977:646).

<sup>14</sup> If memory serves me right, Yi mentioned that *kagok* property holder Kim Yŏnggi (b.1958) was “a friend and fellow student,” which would mean they share the same year of birth.

<sup>15</sup> *Hŭng* (興), a notoriously difficult-to-translate feeling, as discussed in Chapter 7.2, ‘enthusiasm’ as a mix of ‘joy’ and ‘excitement’; often rendered as ‘ecstasy’.

you have to put all this splendid **upset**-ness in the song, and when you are enjoying yourself, then, too, you have to sing accordingly. Yet, all of these feelings, these **emotional** things may not come straight through like that, but rather have to seep through.<sup>16</sup> Do you know what I mean by ‘seep through’? Just like those times when you are outside and you get drenched, that’s how it has to seep through. Now, that is something amazing, and precisely in this way as **academic** as **academic** things go.<sup>17</sup> I have to express my sadness without crying. And if the *han* giving away my sadness is such that I feel like singing a *p’ansori* that has me pounding the ground with my fists – (sings a *p’ansori* excerpt:) “*ullōgo manura*”<sup>18</sup> – we cannot not only not express this sadness with our body, but we must neither give it away in our expression, nor must it come through in our words. If I want to express my sadness in one long phrase, it may come out only as an **extract**<sup>19</sup> of all these things inside me, no matter how charged I am. This is the most difficult part in the most difficult song genre, but also the most attractive. When I have completely internalized these emotions – become aware<sup>20</sup> and internalized them – then I can move my listeners. But before that I have to feel and fall for my song’s attractiveness myself. If I have fallen for it and turn into a poet myself, I think I will find enough sympathy to convey this transformation into a poet to others because the song is me. This can be found in *sijo* which we just mentioned, in *chōngga*, and it is both what is most attractive about these songs and what makes them indispensable. It is a formal cultural heritage, indeed part of the World Heritage – not *kasa* or *sijo*, but only *kagok* – for having this characteristic. There [in *kagok*] you have to adapt your *hobŭp*<sup>21</sup>, too, to match the instruments. So now the singer has to not only sing the song, but, like in an orchestra performance, be in accord with the other parts that differ from his own, as they say, “be in tune with others without losing yourself”.<sup>22</sup> As

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<sup>16</sup> *Paeōnada*.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Academic’ here may have taken on a slighty “Konglish” shade, with a meaning closer to ‘sophisticated’ or ‘refined’.

<sup>18</sup> I have not been able to ascertain which *p’ansori* piece this phrase belongs to.

<sup>19</sup> *Ekkisū*, from Japanese エキス (*ekisu*), itself derived from ‘extract’.

<sup>20</sup> Yi uses what seems like another Konglish expression: *tairekt’ūga toeda* – ‘becoming direct’.

<sup>21</sup> See Howard (2006a:28-9, 35).

<sup>22</sup> *Hwaibudong* (和而不同 – harmony – while doing/but – not – the same = “keeping a good relationship with others without following mindlessly”); see Chapter 7.3.

when you are creating a beautiful **harmony**, in our song we converse back and forth, matching our breath with the instrumental accompaniment and the rhythmic cycles, forming **communication**. These are things that you don't find in other songs or other parts.

Q: So that is something you find only in *kagok*?

A: Only there, yes, that is right.

Q: So that is something that *kasa* and *sijo* do not have?

A: *Kasa* and *sijo* ... *kasa* and *sijo* also have that, but there this element can be omitted. In *kasa*, instead of *kayagŭm*, *kŏmun'go*, *haegŭm*, *taegŭm* and *p'iri* ... it depends on the approach. For people to simply feel with your song, if you are accompanied by only one instrument, their grasping of the song will only go so far. Yet if they are supposed to empathize with a number of parts that have to be in place – they can be string instruments, the reverberation of wind instruments, the \_\_\_\_<sup>23</sup> of percussion instruments – then these different players have to not only go together with each other, but this mix has to be absorbed into one single piece of music. That is something you don't see in other types of music, but is *kagok*'s unique, in a way, charm, and what seems can be called its characteristic.<sup>24</sup>

Q: Does that mean that you think *kagok* has greater charm than *kasa* and *sijo*?

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<sup>23</sup> Unintelligible.

<sup>24</sup> Due to Yi's tendency to speak in very long sentences, in the course of which the different parts sometimes no longer grammatically relate to each other in a definite way, the meaning of the preceding paragraph is not entirely unambiguous. Yet the gist of the argument seems to be that having a wider array of instruments multiplies the expressive potential of the song played, but also increases the difficulty of channelling all the different voices into a single expressive content. In other words: fewer instruments make it easier for the audience to understand the expressive content which, on the downside, cannot be expressed as rich and deeply.

A: In my case, [yes],<sup>25</sup> as someone majoring in *kagok* and being in that field, in talking about what I know well, being in that field and all... But that does not mean one always has to. Man does not live by rice alone! Unpolished rice is good, and white steamed rice is tasty. Now, one day I can garnish it with black beans, another day I can put lentils or something slightly different on top, and eat it. Although on some days white rice is alright, on some days fried rice can be good as well.

So even though I like *kagok*, it is my absolute preference and the field I major in, on some days – just as there may be times when I might want to accompany with some tomato which I don't particularly like or times when I want to drink some wine – it is the same with *kasa* and *sijo*. So, some days are for *sijo*, or sometimes I will be able to **relax**<sup>26</sup> better with *kasa*. So when we want to situate *chōngga* themselves we can discern that its charm lies in that, and that *kagok*'s charm in that context appears as a little fresher,<sup>27</sup> and can be seen as having this a little more.

Q: So do you think there is a particular charm in *sijo* as well?

A: As I mentioned before, in the case of *sijo* I can show emotions a little more. While in *kagok* they may only seep through, in *sijo* I can be yelling. To be specific, what sets *sijo* apart is that you have *p'yōng sijo*, *chirūm sijo*, or just *ujo sijo*, or *sasōl sijo*. Now, as you have a frame in *kagok*, everything has to go within that frame, even if you have a lot of *sasōl*<sup>28</sup> to fit in, a lot and a lot to fit in indeed. *Sijo*, on the other hand, is the “song of the moment.” It combines *si* for time and *cho* for melody. When interpreted like that, the moment or occasion in question can

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<sup>25</sup> As is typical in Korean communication style, Yi does not actually pronounce this, as saying ‘yes’ to such a rather bold statement would be going out on a limb. Maybe, she even felt it would seem impolite in front of someone whose field of study is *sijo*. Still her answer most certainly implies that she means ‘yes’.

<sup>26</sup> This rather unusual wording seems to hint at a slightly Konglish connotation of ‘relax’, closer to the Korean term *yōyu* (explained below), or something like ‘to be at ease’. It does imply, though, that *kasa* puts less strain on the singer than *kagok*.

<sup>27</sup> *Sinch'ul* (新出 – new – come out).

<sup>28</sup> See explanation for *sasōl sijo* above. Yi is pointing out the sometimes epic scope of *sasōl sijo* texts which lets the *kagok* form's ability to accommodate even such texts – always matching the instrumental accompaniment – appear as a remarkable feature.

be sad or merry, but just as well it can be an occasion related to the four seasons.<sup>29</sup> So, what we call the occasion, what we call the **time** takes manifold [forms].<sup>30</sup> So, today I am not in the mood to sit very quietly and sing this song, and then I want to be sighing. When that happens, *sijo* really does have this melancholy side to it, and there is a song for that purpose.<sup>31</sup> Maybe today I am in such a great mood that I want to be yelling, but if you want to yell in *kagok* you don't get more than (sings a *kagok* excerpt): “*ohora muo tabu*”.<sup>32</sup> So, especially when you yell, you have to be strictly within the frame. In *sijo*, if I have lung power left I can be singing longer, if I am short on breath I can work it into something faster, so then when I want to yell, I can sing a bit higher ... Maybe today my **condition** is low, then I can sing in a slightly lower volume as well. Now, this is the charm of *sijo*.

In summary, Yi Sŭngyun's account conceptualizes *chŏngga*'s aesthetic through a Confucian lens. The two main characteristics she highlights, and in respect of both of which *kagok* among the *chŏngga* genres takes the prize, are 1) the self-control and restraint that a performance is subjected to, which allows the singer to express emotion only very subtly, and 2) the harmony between the parts, expressed through the above-mentioned term, *hwaibudong*. This term, although of Confucian origin, is closely aligned with the Daoist concept of *he*, so clearly in this respect the two traditions are complementary rather than competing. *Sijo*'s specific charm is specified as being one of expressive versatility with so great a repertoire to choose from that the right song for every occasion can be found.

The amount of food comparisons is striking (cf. Chapter 7.2), especially in contrast to the complete lack of such comparisons in Western music, where nobody would think of calling a

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<sup>29</sup> *Ch'unhach'udong* (春夏秋冬 – spring – summer – autumn – winter = “the seasons”).

<sup>30</sup> Unintelligible, but ‘forms’ seems logical.

<sup>31</sup> A reference to the fact that the choice of which musical *sijo* type to use for singing a *sijo* text depends on the content of the *sijo*, for example the mood or whether the speaker in the text is a man or a woman, a scholar, a warrior, and so on. While conventions are in place for popular *sijo* texts, a *sijo* singer who wants to sing a *sijo* text not commonly sung will make his own choice.

<sup>32</sup> My transcription here, although confirmed by a native speaker, seems not entirely correct and I have not been able to ascertain the provenance of this excerpt.

Beethoven sonata ‘tasty’, or compare a Mozart symphony to Austrian pastries.<sup>33</sup> It may sound simplistic and even clichéd, but the reason may just be the central role that food plays in Korean life. Although it can be argued, inaccurately in some cases,<sup>34</sup> that food is important everywhere, those who know Korean people and Korean food in its variety of taste nuances and complexities will understand what I mean. Rutt, discussing why people who only studied Classical Chinese and don’t know Korea cannot achieve good translations of Korean Classical Chinese writings, reminds us: “I was ... hazarded that in order to translate Korean you need to know two things—one is the Korean landscape, and the other is what Korean people are like. You can’t get those out of the books” (2008:143). Similarly, only by knowing what Koreans are like can we understand the special place that food holds for them. It is common, for example, among Koreans of all ages and demographics to travel to other places in Korea just to sample local specialities, even if these same specialities are available elsewhere.

### 8.3 Pak Mun-gyu

Pak Mun-gyu [Pak Mun’gyu] (b.1949), a notable *kagok* singer, *p’iri* (oboe) player and *kugak* educator, is a student of Yi Chuhwan. He was my main source on *chōngga* teaching at the university level, so he has already been introduced in Chapter 5.6, where I described him as a *chōngga* lecturer at a number of universities, including Seoul National University, who had taught at the Gugak National High School in the past. I met Pak on 21 August 2015 at the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture (*Wōlha munhwa chaedan*) where he holds the post of vice-board director (*puisajang*), next to board director Kim Kyōngbae (b.1940). The foundation was set up in 1992 by the former *kagok* property holder Kim Wōlha (1918-1996) and is named after her.

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<sup>33</sup> The only such case I can think of is in jokes: German comedian Oliver Kalkofe calls the albums of a *Volkstümliche Musik* (‘folksy music’, a popular derivation of traditional folk music *Volksmusik*) combo “gesungenes Gammelfleisch, ein Hauch Verwesung auf CD” (“rotten meat in song form, a whiff of putrefaction on CD”).

<sup>34</sup> My home country, Germany, is not widely considered a nation of gourmets. In his cultural history of German cuisine (2009:7-8) Peter talks about “culinary civilization deficits” which may have their roots in “protestant-pietistic contempt for food, mixed with the militaristic-noble arrogance to dismiss good food as bourgeois and unsportsmanlike”. Clearly, not all cultures value good food, and culinary variety and experiences to the same degree.

Located in Chongno, Seoul, it provides office and practice space, organizes recitals, and offers scholarships to singers. From the end of the 1990s onwards it has also commissioned new *chōngga*-based compositions (Moon Hyun 2015:25). Pak Mun-gyu called the dynamics and expression in *sijo* the “most difficult in the world” and its defining features, in contrast to its simple melodic setup. At the same time, he emphasized these as characteristics that set *sijo* apart from other *chōngga*.

Q: What do you consider the most important aesthetic characteristics of *chōngga*, and in particular *sijo*, teacher?

A: When considering *sijo*’s aesthetical characteristics, we have these notes (sings:) “*chung, chung... hwang, chung, im, chung*”,<sup>35</sup> (sings the beginning of a famous *sijo*:) “*ch’ōng sallī pyōkkeye suya*,” that is easy to pronounce (sings:) “*hwang, chung, im*,” that’s why it is very easy to learn. Yes, (sings:) “*ch’ōng sallī pyōkkeye suya, chung*,” that is easy to learn, but then so difficult! If that is not the most difficult thing in the world! Why? Because it has what in the West is called **dynamics**.

(Sings a *sijo* ornament:) “*Ih*,” on the other hand something just like this (sings a *kagok* ornament:) “*ah*”, this is *kagok*, and *kagok* is easy. Unlike you would expect, *kagok* is easy. In *kagok*, if you just know the notes well, there is no trouble in singing like this. *Sijo* on the other hand has all this shaking, pressing and releasing,<sup>36</sup> this flavour<sup>37</sup> makes a truly great style of music: a music called *sijo*. That is why to me *sijo* is the most – at the same time the easiest and the most difficult music in the world, like that.

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<sup>35</sup> The corresponding pitches are *chung* = e<sup>b</sup>, *hwang* = a flat, *im* = b flat.

<sup>36</sup> The Korean words used here are *hūndūlda*, *chorūda* and *p’ulda*.

<sup>37</sup> The Korean word used is *mat*; see discussion in Chapter 7.2.

*Chŏmpit*...<sup>38</sup> What is easy about it? The notes are earnestly \_\_\_\_<sup>39</sup> and there are not many pitches. The most difficult thing about it, however, it is this articulation – **expression** – which I think is more difficult than in any other music. They say Indian music is splendid, I would not know how splendid Indian music is, though.

Q: What do you think is the particular charm of *sijo* and the other *chŏngga* genres, next to other musical traditions of Korea?

A: Of *sijo*?

Q: Of *sijo* or the other *chŏngga* genres.

A: *Sijo*'s particular charm... Well, *sijo*, as I have said, having only these three simple notes, still allows for all sorts of expression; it seems that that is also why it survived in the popular realm. The reason it survived in the popular realm is that while it is difficult there is also an easy side to it, so it unites these two sides; as I have said, this is why you start out as an **amateur** and later go on to – what do they call it – become a master?<sup>40</sup> Kind of like turning into a specialist while you are achieving the perfect song.<sup>41</sup> Yes, that's how *sijo* is the kind of genre which can be done by unknown musicians and expert musicians alike... that's *sijo*.

Pak Mun-gyu's answers mirror what several singers emphasized and what Moon Hyun, my singing teacher, told me on an earlier occasion, by challenging the notion that *sijo* is easy. In one of our classes, Moon drew on a food comparison for illustration, telling me that if you were trying to prepare Korean *bibimbap* (a popular dish that blends several vegetables with egg and

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<sup>38</sup> Unintelligible; the word used clearly is 겹빔, as confirmed by a number of native speakers I have asked, but nobody knows what this word means or what Pak tried to say with it.

<sup>39</sup> Unintelligible.

<sup>40</sup> *Torŭl t'ŏdŭk hada* (道- 摠得 – “master the way”). The expression has a Daoist ring to it.

<sup>41</sup> *Tŭgŭm* (得音).



chilli paste) with only three ingredients, it would be much more difficult to achieve a tasty dish, and that the same held true for the smaller number of pitches used in *sijo*.

Two other singers whose opinions are reported in Park Sung-Hee's research are useful to incorporate at this point, namely Yi Yang-gyo, the current property holder for *kasa*, and Kim Hosŏng. The latter is quoted as saying:

When I studied *shijo*, I was only allowed to learn it after learning *kagok* and *kasa*. I think that this teaching sequence is necessary for learners. These days, people are taught that *shijo* is easy to learn and anyone can sing it after only a few lessons. This is not right because *shijo* uses only two main tones, in contrast with *kagok*'s five: You have to be able to express yourself and the meaning of the text properly using only these two tones. So you could say that, while *kagok* is a genre of melody songs, *shijo* consists of poetry songs. That is why *shijo* is more difficult to sing and a harder vehicle for expressing meaning than *kagok* (2011:151).

Park reports that:

Yi Yanggyo agrees with Kim, claiming that only those people with no common sense claim that *shijo* is easy to sing. [...] Yi told me that, even though he was equally skilled at singing *kagok*, *kasa*, and *shijo*, it was *shijo*, and particularly *p'yŏngshijo*, that he found the most challenging of all (2011:151).

Closer examination reveals that nobody except Yi Yang-gyo said that *sijo* was more difficult than both *kasa* and *kagok*, a point I will return to below. Pak Mun-gyu, on the other hand, said that *sijo* was more difficult than only *kagok* – possibly a hyperbole to drive home the point that *sijo* are not easy. He said “if you know the notes well”, so his point was that the dynamics of *sijo* are more difficult than those of *kagok*, not that *sijo* as a whole is more difficult. To be sure, *kagok* as the most difficult genre among the three is a widespread commonplace and common-sense idea in the *kugak* world, to which the fact that unlike *sijo*, only professional singers were able to sing it

since Chosŏn times bears ample testimony.<sup>42</sup> On closer examination, Yi Yang-gyo's and Kim Hosŏng's opinions can be summarized as arguments not for *sijo* being more difficult than other *chŏngga*, but for *sijo* not being easier than other *chŏngga*. This is a fine difference, but important nonetheless. Their overriding concern, then, must have been to rescue *sijo* from its lesser reputation as a genre for beginners and aficionados.

Accordingly, when pressed further, earlier in my interview with him, Moon Hyun was unwilling to assess the relative difficulty of the three genres, instead launching into a lengthy discussion on the problem of whether we define difficulty as technical difficulties in sound production, difficulties in appreciation, or difficulties in the sense of sophistication, and about the complexities in the definition of these terms themselves. He ultimately concluded that especially *kasa* and *sijo* are genres not unified enough to make sweeping generalizations about the entire canon, saying that it depended on which of the *kasa* or *sijo* musical settings you were talking about.<sup>43</sup> For the record, some of the other singers I have spoken to are quite frank in confirming the traditional difficulty ranking of *chŏngga*. Yi Sŏngyun reported that *kagok* are the hardest, as did Yeh Chan-kun and Kim Yŏnggi. Yeh Chan-kun pointed out that it depends on the singer and that it is difficult to sing all three genres equally well, Kim Yŏnggi added that she categorically considers *kasa* more difficult than *sijo*, and explicitly called *sijo* the easiest of the three.

It is possible that performers who identify as *sijo* specialists,<sup>44</sup> like those previously mentioned, perceive this fine distinction in order to distinguish their performance from that of an amateur. To them, singing a song that is considered easy to learn and something even people without much training can sing, may need to be moderated by the requirement to show how much more

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<sup>42</sup> One of the oldest formulations of this common idea is expressed by Chang Sa-Hun (in 1973 non-commercial material issued by the National Gugak Center, quotation in Donna Kwon 1995:87-8): “*Kagok* is without a doubt the crowning achievement of the *chongak* tradition. It surpasses *sijo* and *kasa* in refinement of vocal technique and range of expressiveness. As the surviving notations show, *kagok* has long enjoyed the highest esteem of the educated classes...”

<sup>43</sup> The differences in the canon and the relative arbitrariness of *kasa* as a genre denomination have been pointed out in, for example, Jeon Ji-young 2004 and are one of the arguments of my unpublished master's thesis from 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Kim Hosŏng (b. 1942) is another important *kugak* person and well-known *chŏngga* singer with considerable credentials as a *sijo* specialist: He learned various *sijo* from the same teachers as Kim Wŏlha, including from Kim T'aeyŏng, Im Sŏgyun and Ch'oe Chŏnghŭi (Kang Sajun in liner notes for Kim Hosung 1996).

effort they are having to put in to turn this song into high-art repertoire and showcase their professionalism. In the debate about *sijo*'s level of difficulty we can see a parallel to what Western performers and critics sometimes say about repertoire that is considered technically easy to play, such as Mozart's piano sonatas, but which is therefore imagined as requiring a much deeper understanding. An example of this widespread idea is implicit in the following quotation (a concert announcement for the pianist Jan Lisiecki by Reinald Hanke) from the concert and opera programme already mentioned above (with my emphasis added):

Not an exaggeration: At not much more than 20 years, Jan Lisiecki who grew up in the home country of the legendary Glenn Gould<sup>45</sup> musically has more things to say than many more well-known media stars – some of them still young, too – who have been touring the world's concert halls in smart outfits during the last years: Because Lisiecki is actually a gifted *musician* who is just in the process of finding his own artistic individuality.

Creative power instead of virtuosic wizardry

[...] His programme choices are revealing too: On his tour he does not play any virtuosic piece, but two concertos by Mozart – works that revolve around the many small nuances, around creative power and demonstrating presence. In these works you cannot impress with virtuosic wizardry; but it will become evident whether you are able to penetrate to the music's core and present it adequately. Lisiecki has proven repeatedly throughout the last years that he is able to do exactly that (2016:12 of the section "Hamburg & Norddeutschland").

For all the decades of training that many professional musicians receive, and despite music competitions, music is, unfortunately for some, not a race with a winner. Instead music is "unprovable" (to borrow pianist Glenn Gould's words).<sup>46</sup> Although applied to the compositional

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<sup>45</sup> The mention of Gould is no coincidence, as Gould was himself a pianist famous for applying a new perspective on musical works rather than for virtuosic wizardry.

<sup>46</sup> From a discussion of Bach's "The Art of Fugue." Asked about the continuing fascination that the fugue form held for Bach and later composers, Gould answered: "Well, I suppose there are many reasons, really. I think perhaps there is one that is predominant and that is really pretty difficult to define! I think it is something to do with the very special need that certain types of artists exhibit: need to prove that what they do is valid, that it is not achieved by random selection, that every moment flows logically from the moment before and the moment after... it's not confined to musicians, – that need – but maybe because music itself is so unprovable, so

process in the original context, it holds true for musical performance as well, which is equally unprovable. Virtuosity provides one possible point of comparison – and, we may say, one way for the artists without confidence in their Mozart interpretations to prove that what they do is valid. Hence, the pianist who can play Liszt’s *Transcendental Études* is probably considered better by most than the one who cannot. Likewise, the singer who can sing the entire *kagok* cycle is probably thought to be better than the one who can only sing *sijo*. What, though, about the performer who can play Liszt but chooses to play Mozart? This performer specializing in Mozart will not be happy to hear people saying that Mozart is easy. Despite the cliché and the datedness of this discourse, Hanke’s review, when taken at face value, achieves the not unremarkable feat of not only elevating the Mozart performer Lisiecki to the level of the virtuoso wizard, but indeed, ranking him even higher. Lisiecki “penetrates to the music’s core”, something that not only does not require virtuosic wizardry – the ability for which is to be taken for granted, – but by implication is neither possible, nor necessary, in pieces that do require virtuosic wizardry. We witness a musical value judgment favouring the unprovable over the provable. Whether we agree with this judgment is up to individual taste or the task of music critics; the same process, however, I argue is at work in what a good number of *chōngga* singers say about *sijo*.

It is not hard to imagine why a *sijo* specialist like Moon Hyun would want to challenge the perception that *sijo* is easy, at least in the meaning of “lacking depth”. Likewise, Yi Yang-gyo is the property holder for *kasa*, but his roots lie with *sijo* singing; he grew up singing *naep’oje sijo* in his native Ch’ungch’ōn, lost his first job after moving to Seoul for spending too much time singing *sijo* at the *sjobang*, earned money from singing for the first time by teaching *sijo* to hikers, and learned *kagok* and *kasa* only at age 31 after meeting Yi Chuhwan.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, three of the singers I interviewed said that *kagok* was the hardest (Kim Yōnggi, Yi Sūngyun and Yeh Chan-kun). Kim is the *kagok* property holder and Yi repeatedly mentioned that *kagok* is her

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improbable – you know? – one might almost say. Musicians somehow seem to exhibit it more prominently than some other types of artists... it’s very difficult at times, with certain kinds of music, particularly, to say why something strikes one as appropriate or inappropriate...” At <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exD8bhJP1eo> (accessed 26 September 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Yi Yang-gyo’s life story is told in Lee So-young 2007.

‘major,’<sup>48</sup> so it is accurate to see both of them as being first and foremost *kagok* performers. Yeh Chan-kun (below) establishes a distinction rather between styles of *sijo*. We can see that among those who defend *sijo*’s difficulty, it is frequently presupposed that *sijo*’s reputation of being easier to sing detracts from its aesthetic value. This view is challenged in two ways: not only are *sijo* not necessarily easier to sing just because they employ fewer tones and less specialized singing techniques, but neither does this mean that they have less aesthetic value. All the *sijo* specialists point to some vague, intangible quality that a good performance of *sijo* needs in order to compensate for its apparent simplicity. It is hard to ascertain if this is a modern or anachronistic evaluation of the *sijo* aesthetic. Cho Kyu-Ick, after all, writes that master *kagaek* singers in late Chosŏn did not sing *kasa* or *sijo*, considering the singing style vulgar (1994:57).

A German friend, talking about Korean monochromatic painting after translating the programme notes for an exhibition, once pointed out to me how important a part of the aesthetic the required and evident effort on the part of the painter was. As I recall this, the paintings of the Korean abstract painter Kim Whan-ki (1913-1974), which I saw in his museum in 2015, come to mind: huge canvases filled with elaborate patterns testifying to extraordinary efforts on the part of their creator. The evidence may be anecdotal, but the idea of effort seems an important parameter in the aesthetic sensibility of contemporary South Koreans.

#### 8.4 Yeh Chan-kun

Among the singers I interviewed, Yeh Chan-kun [Ye Ch’an’gŏn] was, next to Moon Hyun, the most knowledgeable about regional *sijo* practice, and familiar in particular with *yŏngje* *sijo* from Kyŏngsang Provinces (see Chapter 6.3). I met Yeh on 24 August 2015 at the Wolha Foundation. Yeh had learned the *yŏngje* repertoire, which consists of mostly *p’yŏng* and *sasŏl* *sijo*, from one of the previous regional property holders for it, Yi Kirŭng (1901-1996), whom Yeh referred to by Yi’s penname, Ilgwan.<sup>49</sup> Yeh described *yŏngje* *sijo* as being near moribund, with only a handful of

<sup>48</sup> As an *isuja* of *kagok*, she is referring to her *kagok* transmission training with Kim Wŏlha.

<sup>49</sup> 一觀 – one – look.

people still practising it, including him, the current holder Pak Sŏnae and, possibly, some “taxi drivers.”<sup>50</sup> Yeh is the secretary-general of the Wolha Foundation for Art and Culture. He has also learned the standard versions of *kagok*, *kasa*, *sijo* and *sich’ang* from *kagok* property holder Kim Kyŏngbae, and completed transmission training in *kagok*. He currently does not teach students. As he is an expert on *yŏngje* *sijo*, I thought it would be especially interesting to specify my research questions on aesthetics and ask about the aesthetic properties of *yŏngje* *sijo*, and whether they set *yŏngje* *sijo* apart from other *sijo* styles.

Q: What do you consider the most important aesthetic characteristics of *yŏngje* *sijo*? In comparison to other *sijo* styles, what is most unique about it?

A: It has force. The way people from Yŏngnam talk, or fight. It is not going, “I said this, you said that”. Rather “OK, done”. “Alright, let’s see”. That is how their words are short-spoken, clear and concise,<sup>51</sup> as well as forceful and energetic; that is characteristic. That has certainly remained just the same.

Q: So you are saying that this way of speaking is reflected in the way songs are sung?

A: The **accent** is different. (Sings the beginning of the *sijo* *T’aesani* in *yŏngje* style, noticeably shortening the fourth syllable ‘*noŋ-*’ and emphasizing the following ‘*-ta:*’) “*T’aesani nopta*.” You see, this part that is rising, (sings:) “*nopta*,” is originally sung like this in *kyŏngje* style, (sings in *kyŏngje* style:) “*nopta*”. And, like this in *sŏgamje* style, (sings in *sŏgamje* style:) “*nopta*”. In *yŏngje* style you have this, (sings:) “*nopta*”, adding force, (sings:) “*nopta*”. Adding force, just as if you

<sup>50</sup> A second regional property holder, Yi Chongnok, is active in South Kyŏngsang Province.

<sup>51</sup> *Kandanmyŏngnyo* (簡單明瞭 – brief – single – bright – bright).

were pushing the brush for a stroke in calligraphy writing. With force added, magnificent and energetic<sup>52</sup>... now if you go back in history, you know there were *hwarang*.

The driving force behind the three kingdoms' unification, that's where you have Yŏngnam region. Whether you talk about Kyŏngju or... Yŏngnam region has from the old times been at the forefront of enlightenment, politically, economically and culturally. I mean there is this spirit. It was where most partisans<sup>53</sup> enlisted, during that long era of such influence that kind of spirit developed. That's why when you yell these songs in such a flashy way these songs admittedly merit such a way of delivery. Especially when I sang *p'yŏng* and *sasŏl* sijo a lot, that's when I felt that this might be the reason; yes, this is not something I have been told by my teacher. Rather I have thought about it again and again while listening to other things, feeling like that, feeling that it is like that, feeling that this may be the reason. But, seeing this as just a musical characteristic; that is an insight I have had only when I was recently doing a play. I realized this: The aspect that makes *yŏngp'an*<sup>54</sup> so good and endows it with such a refreshing feel is this consistency, this directness that is beyond the fickleness<sup>55</sup> of worldly affairs.<sup>56</sup>

Maybe you happen to know *Talmado*.<sup>57</sup> Looking at the painting of Bodhidharma you can tell that it is a painting from which a great deal of *ki* emanates. Yet, this *ki* is not discernible to the eye, you know, like when you are directly around a sick person, just for a day, you get completely exhausted. Or with children ... Many people say that raising children you receive it. Right, or if you are healthy or hear kind words. The same with *ki* in music, if you hear this [sings the beginning of a *yŏngje sasŏl* sijo in a notably soft style that lacks the typical energy:]  
“*Sangsŏn chojaryŏng ŭl ne tŭrŏnna mot tŭrŏnna*” (“Have or haven't you heard about Zhao Zilong

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<sup>52</sup> *Ssikssikhada, ungjang* (雄壯 - male - admirable).

<sup>53</sup> *Ŭibyŏng* (義兵 - correct - soldier). The reference may be to volunteers who enlisted during the Imjin Wars (1592-8), although the term now most often refers to resistance fighters active against the Japanese in Korea in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pratt and Rutt 1999:493).

<sup>54</sup> *Yŏngp'an* is a synonym of *yŏngje*; “*Yŏngp'an chot'a*” (“*Yŏngp'an* is good”) is a popular dictum in the area.

<sup>55</sup> *Chobyŏnsŏkkae* (朝變夕改 - morning - alter - evening - change), applied to something that always changes.

<sup>56</sup> *Set'ae* (世態 - humanity - state = ‘social conditions’).

<sup>57</sup> A famous Buddhist painting (mid-17<sup>th</sup> century) by Kim Myŏngguk, depicting Bodhidharma.

from Changshan”),<sup>58</sup> sung just like that, you become exhausted. Why? Because it is weak. You have to put force into it. [Sings again in a more powerful way:] “*Sangsan chojaryŏng ŭl ne tŭrŏnna mot tŭrŏnna.*” You have to put so much force into this, so I... so I couldn’t even sing three songs. Seriously. Not even three. Why? As you finish, you are completely exhausted. You have to have endurance. Why? Because that is the kind of song that *yŏngje* is. It has a different flavour to it than standard *kyŏngje*, or *sŏgamje*, or *naep’oje*. Only when you sing it like that, it has that refreshing feel for the listener, that same lifting of your spirits that you experience looking at a painting with vigour in its strokes. The energy of *yŏngje* is in it, if you sing it just like that, it will not have that flavour to it. You can’t sing *yŏngje* in the same delicate way as *sŏgamje*, coming only from the technical side of it. Because when you hear people from Busan speaking, it’s strong. In their way of speaking, the accent is strong.

Most of Yeh’s observations in the first paragraph of his second answer, including the loan word ‘accent’, appear almost literally in a description of *yŏngje* sijo on the homepage of Korea’s Cultural Heritage Administration: in this style “*p’yŏng* and *sasŏl* sijo are most numerous; the abruptly sung endings reflect the strong accent unique to Kyŏngsang Province and create a magnificent and energetic impression.”<sup>59</sup> The strong link that Yeh’s account establishes between Yŏngnam dialect, the endemic prosody of the region, and the singing style in *yŏngje* sijo can therefore be seen as being part of an established discourse, rather than an opinion of Yeh. Yŏngnam dialect is in turn interpreted as a result of the region’s spirit, which is dated back more than a thousand years into the past. Yeh’s account reflects the strong regionalism encountered in Korea which in Yŏngnam’s case has often played out as a sense of rivalry with the Honam region that encompasses Chŏlla Province. According to Grace Koh (personal communication, 23 February 2016), such regionalism is fostered in school, so curricula in schools in Yŏngnam

<sup>58</sup> Zhao Yun (?-229) was a Chinese general from Changshan.

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.cha.go.kr/korea/heritage/search/Culresult\\_Db\\_View.jsp?mc=NS\\_04\\_03\\_01&VdkVgwKey=22,00060000,22](http://www.cha.go.kr/korea/heritage/search/Culresult_Db_View.jsp?mc=NS_04_03_01&VdkVgwKey=22,00060000,22) (accessed 22 February 2016).



feature the region's history, based on sometimes mythical accounts from the *Samguk Yusa*, and advocate the exceptionality of the region.

Yeh's account is a good example of the flexibility and compatibility of philosophical traditions in Korean culture: Yeh draws on a Buddhist painting that is explained in terms stemming from Daoist cosmology to serve as a point of comparison for a musical genre in the tradition of Confucianism. The application of the concept of *qi* in the context of painting is attested in traditional Chinese aesthetic thought:

Then at the end of the 5th century Xie He, in his article *Gubua pinlu xu* (Commentaries on ancient paintings; in Tang [Zhiqi. *Huishi neijian*] 1626:1-2) first coined the phrase *qiyun shengdong* as the first of the "six principles of painting". Shengdong means "vividly alive". The expression *qiyun shengdong* means the manifestation of flow of vitality in a finished artistic product, with the union of *yin* and *yang*. This phrase has since become a most sought-after quality of the highest artistic order in all the arts (Edward Ho 1997:37-8).

## 8.5 Kim Yŏnggi

Kim Yŏnggi (b.1958) is one of three current holders for *kagok* as an important intangible cultural property, next to Kim Kyŏngbae (b.1940) and Cho Sunja (b.1944). While Cho Sunja is active in the city of Masan (now part of Changwŏn) on the coast of South Kyŏngsang Province, Kim Yŏnggi and Kim Kyŏngbae are based in Seoul. Kim was born in Kyŏngju, attended the Gugak National High School and Seoul National University, and, having studied the *kŏmun'go* zither as well, became the first transmission student of the previous *kagok* property holder Kim Wŏlha in 1973. Appointed as a property holder in 2001, Kim teaches a number of *isusaeng* transmission students of different ages as part of her stipulated obligations to transmit the genre she specializes in to a younger generation. For that purpose, she has been provided a facility in Seoul, the *Kagok* Transmission Centre (*Kagok chŏnsugwan*), where I met her on 26 August 2015. The occasion also provided a chance to glimpse the relationship between property holder Kim and one of her disciples, a middle-school-age student. The student's class was interrupted as I arrived

for the interview with Yoo Kyoung-eun, a Korean friend and *taegŭm* transverse flute player who had been a student of Kim back when Kim had lectured at the Gugak National High School. This suggests that Kim's teaching was not bound to strict class times, since the student waited next to us while we talked for more than an hour, interrupted only when Kim sent her out to buy coffee for us. While this may seem like an irrelevant anecdote, it sheds light on the student-teacher relationship and its differences to its Western counterparts: when I learned the violin as a child, interrupting or even having a visitor during class time would have been unthinkable in light of the fees, so clearly the relationship between the property holder and her disciples is a special, almost familial one. I was not present during the class, but the way Kim discussed it, it seems that her teaching was not fundamentally different in style from that at the Gugak National High School which I observed and have discussed in Chapter 5.5, although her classes must be more intensive because only one student is present.

As a property holder of *kagok*, Kim Yŏnggi is regularly featured in concerts and considered an authority and among the very best performers of *chŏngga*.

Q: Do you think that sung sijo have aesthetic characteristics absent from other *chŏngga* genres?

A: Well, when you think of sijo, it is, unlike *kagok*, somehow a little more, well, a little more leisurely.<sup>60</sup> While *kagok* is certainly leisurely at times because it is so slow, it is more accurate to say, I think, that in *kagok*, however slow it may be, there is always to a greater degree some permanent motion. Sijo, in comparison, is rather plain and leisurely.

Q: Leisurely?<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Hangahada* (閑暇 – comfortable/at ease – gap).

<sup>61</sup> I asked this question simply because I did not know the word *hangaropta* that Kim used.

A: Yes, well, for example – how can I say this – unhurried? Serene? Composed?<sup>62</sup> To give you an example: If you sing ‘*Ch’öngsalli*’ (sings the beginning of a famous *sijo*:) “*Ch’öng salli*”, it seems to just draw out leisurely like that. But when you sing the same phrase ‘*ch’öng salli*’ in its *kagok* version, you know that it extends for eleven beats. So now we can also sing this with the melody of *Kyerak*,<sup>63</sup> then it is sung like this (sings *Kyerak*:) “*Ch’öng salli*”. As you see, in the *kagok* version we can say that, even just within these three syllables ‘*ch’öng salli*’ – there is this permanent motion whereas in the *sijo* version it is just a bit more unhurried:<sup>64</sup> Drawn out evenly with just one shaking push and afterwards just continuing. That is what differentiates these two from one another.

So I think that in comparison to *kagok*, *sijo* makes for a style that can be listened to with more ease.<sup>65</sup> And *sijo* itself is also a little more plain and pure.<sup>66</sup> Compared to *kagok*, we could say that there is not as much melody, just (sings the third syllable of *Ch’öngsalli*:) ‘*ri*’,<sup>67</sup> and it is even easier because the final pitch is closed. (Sings the second rhythm cycle of *Ch’öngsalli*:) “*P’yökkeye suya*”. As it is a single, drawn-out pitch, I think it has a more leisurely feel, yes.<sup>68</sup> Yes, so my feeling about *sijo* is that it is for just anybody who has his mind set on it and – just like reading a poem – wants to understand it; just comfortably sing a song – that song, in my humble opinion, is *sijo*, yes.

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<sup>62</sup> *Yöyuropta* (餘裕 – be left over – be plentiful) – because this word is so difficult to translate, I have used a different English word for each of its three occurrences to approximate its meaning. *Yöyu* is, in my experience, used far more in everyday life than the preceding *hangaropta*, and applied to all sorts of circumstances and situations. It may be best defined as ‘peace of mind’ or ‘absence of pressure/stress/worry’ and occurs for example as financial *yöyu*, *yöyu* of time and so on.

<sup>63</sup> *Kyerak* is one of the pieces in the *kagok* cycle.

<sup>64</sup> Once more, *yöyu*. My interpretation of the logic of this argument is that the permanent motion of the *kagok* version requires more control and concentration, and puts greater strain on the singer in that he/she has to control the voice and ration the breath better. Therefore the *sijo* version allows for more *yöyu* – ‘absence of strain’.

<sup>65</sup> *Yöyuropta*.

<sup>66</sup> *Tambaekhada* (淡泊 – bright – white). This adjective is usually applied in a culinary context and difficult to convey in its meaning to someone who does not know Korean food. It usually describes a broth that is simple, light and clean in its taste, as opposed to things which are spicy or have a complex taste.

<sup>67</sup> During this syllable the first pitch change in the *sijo* version occurs.

<sup>68</sup> This observation likely refers to the way the ‘-ya’ is sung in *sijo*, using only one drawn-out pitch, plain without vibrato and ending abruptly without any ornament, whereas in *Kyerak* the same syllable features various changes in dynamics and vibrato, and rising in pitch at the end.

Similarly to her fellow Kim Wŏlha student Yi Sŭngyun, Kim Yŏnggi describes *sijo*'s aesthetic in opposition to *kagok*, turning to a comparison of the text's musical realization in each for proof of her argument that *sijo* are a plainer cousin of *kagok*. This account reflects her agreement with the view that *sijo* derived from *kagok* as an alternate performance mode for the *sijo* text that was both easier to sing and easier to listen to.

## Conclusion

We can learn a number of things about *sijo*'s literary form by looking at its musical settings, and especially by comparing the settings of *sijo* and *kagok* with regard to the musical divisions' correspondence to semantic units in the texts. In the *sijo* musical setting, there is only a loose correspondence: each musical section aligns with a grammatically independent unit of text. The musical setting, then, treats all three lines of *sijo* as equivalent, affording each the same proportion. The division of the text in *kagok*, however, sheds doubt on the three *chang* division of *sijo* texts being an essential formal feature. The *kagok* setting, with its instrumental interlude between the second and the third line of the text, attests to a fundamental caesura and, we might even say, a sense of structural balance between the first two lines on one side, and the third line on the other. Such a division, in turn, aligns with the *sijo* text's four-part sense structure in that it divides the four into two sets of two. *Kagok*, as the older of the two musical settings, may therefore be seen as reflecting *sijo*'s sense structure more accurately. The distribution of the third line's first syllable group – the twist – and the third line's three remaining syllables groups – the conclusion/synthesis – across two separate musical sections underscores their condition of being distinct from each other, but this contrast is lost in the musical setting as *sijo*. However, it is difficult to find a convincing explanation for why the first line of the *sijo* text is divided across two musical sections in *kagok*, given that in terms of *sijo*'s sense structure, they are parts of the same exposition. I can offer only a tentative explanation: we may think of a skilled story-teller who starts his story with a lot of detail to heighten the listener's attention; distribution across two musical sections slows the speed of the exposition and may serve a similar purpose. However, if the storyteller does not pick up pace later, his audience will get bored. Accordingly, the second line with its development of the theme, which is often grammatically constructed in parallel to

the first, may have been seen as not warranting the same narrative slowness that the exposition tolerates. In the case of *sasöl* sijo texts, an apparent equivalence of the three lines is even more pronounced in the musical sijo setting, whereas the *kagok* setting of *sasöl* sijo further emphasizes the importance of sijo's sense structure, seeing how individual musical sections grow overloaded with words in order to maintain this structural feature intact.

In summary, the evidence found in the two musical settings of sijo texts points to certain suggestions towards what a prescriptive model of sijo writing may have entailed, even if such conjecture involves some speculation. I consider it likely that sijo writers thought of sijo mostly in terms of three characteristics: the sense structure, which mirrors that of the Chinese quatrain; the three-syllable exclamation found in many *hyangga*; and an overall approximate balance in proportions. With these characteristics, the rest of the sijo text would have, more or less, fallen into place, given that groups of three or four syllables are “the building blocks of all pre-modern Korean poetry” (Pratt and Rutt 1999:416). Indeed, we can speculate that the conflating of the sense structure's third and fourth part into one line may be owed to the shortness of the *hyangga*-style exclamations, which invariably coincide with the ‘twist’. In any case, we can record that future research on the sijo form should account for sijo's musical dimension, and look at the musical form of *kagok*, rather than that of sijo, for explanation. The penchant of the first generation of sijo scholars for syllable-count-based models may, on the other hand, have reflected a bias resulting from the study of Japanese or Western poetic forms.

We can also conclude that where the discussion about sijo's origins is unfettered by agendas, the view we assume will depend on what we see as distinctive about the sijo form. McCann has noted that traditional analysis of *kasa* poems has described its rhythm as being “three-four or four-four” and concludes that if this refers to syllable-count, the same thing could be said to apply to sijo (1988:27). Similarly, in Rutt (1998:xix) we find the following information: “William

Skillend<sup>1</sup> pointed out that each of the three so-called lines [the *chang*] is really a couplet, which is basic to almost all Korean poetry before the twentieth century: two lines, each of two phrases, and each phrase usually of three or four syllables.” When a characteristic spans a range of genres, it cannot function as a marker to distinguish them from each other. As regards the exclamation at the beginning of the final *chang* in both *hyangga* and *sijo*, judgment depends on whether we consider this as a general feature of Korean aesthetic sensibility, or something sufficiently singular and distinctive to suggest a direct genealogy. It cannot be denied that the discussion seems tainted by nationalist discourse, not least because the arguments in favour of a textual origin in a Chinese tradition at times appear understated in comparison to those advocating a Korean origin. It is important, then, to note that the discussion around *sijo*’s origin has been fettered by the post-liberation Korean identity crisis, which can be interpreted as a result of the trauma of the colonial experience. For an even-handed appraisal of Korean traditions, reliance on Chinese models should be admitted where due. Essential in this is the realization that even if the *sijo* form’s roots lie with the Chinese quatrain, this does not diminish the Koreanness of what became of *sijo* later. The same problematic can be identified with regard to attribution. If a *sijo* is fundamentally seen as a literary work that stands for itself, greatness should not depend on whether it was written by Yi Sunsin or a *kisaeng*, for example. The tendency and motivation to interpret *sijo* as historical documentation undeniably stands in the way of *sijo*’s aesthetic appraisal as literary works. Likewise, Korea’s intellectual environment has come a long way in overcoming the stigma attached to cultural production associated with *kisaeng*, but patriarchal ideas continue to be a problem. And, the demythologization of *kisaeng*, exemplified by O’Rourke’s research on Hwang Chini (2004), must go further to rid evaluations of *kisaeng* writings from essentialising ideas about *kisaeng*.

My discussion of the content of *sijo* texts came to rely heavily on the research of Western scholars, but my aim was not to criticize these scholars and their pioneering research. Instead, in

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<sup>1</sup> No source is given for this quotation from Skillend.

suggesting we try to think about *sijo* in indigenous terms and to appreciate them through the eyes of Chosŏn-era Koreans, I want to open up a new way of thinking about *sijo*. Especially, my discussion of particular writers' ideas should be seen as a measure of how engaging I found their research, rather than of how much I wish to distance myself from it. I conclude, then, that for an objective aesthetic evaluation of the canon, a scholar needs to attempt to rid his mind of modern categories of thought (which are often anachronistic in this context). Viewing *sijo* through the lens of a pre-modern sensibility is bound to be a challenge for Korean scholars, too, but such an anthropology-leaning perspective will surely prove fruitful in understanding the tradition on its own terms. Aesthetic judgment in the form of literary criticism, on the other hand, must identify itself as such, and be differentiated from writings that intend to discuss and represent the tradition.

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the research I offer on genealogy. The first is that the official narrative, according to which all *chŏngga* in institutions of traditional Korean music after liberation such as the National Gugak Center, the preservation system and the Gugak National High School descend directly from Ha Kyuil's versions, is only partly true. As I have shown, there are influences from remnants of other *chŏngga* schools that survived the colonial period and sometimes worked their way into even the preservation system – as in the cases of Chŏng Kyŏngt'ae, Hong Wŏn'gi and Yi Yang-gyo – although it is hard to ascertain to what degree these influences directly shaped the style of singers. It is certain that *chŏngga* singers of the previous generations have engaged with repertoire passed down to them from their teachers with less than absolute rigidity, and nobody imitates Ha Kyuil's style in the way Elvis impersonators copy their model. The presence of extraneous strands of *chŏngga* performance has then possibly served the purpose of strengthening the claim of singers' interpretative freedom, providing 'a second opinion' on historical *chŏngga* performance, and setting the boundaries of what an acceptable range of interpretative freedom is. It has also become clear, however, that singers with



knowledge of extraneous strands of *chŏngga* performance are disappearing – among the singers discussed, only Yi Yang-gyo is still alive, and he no longer sings – and transmitting alternative *chŏngga* repertoires has not been a priority to them. In short, it seems that the *Ch'ujobak* lineage of *chŏngga* performance is effectively extinct. With regard to *sijo*, Moon Hyun remarks:

It can be said that nowadays mainly so-called '*sŏnbip'an* (scholar-style) *sijo*' is transmitted, especially at the National Gugak Center, while the so-called '*kip'an* (*kisaeng*-style) *sijo*', taught to their female disciples by *sagyech'uk* instructors hired at the *kenbŏn* during the Japanese colonial period, may be extant on old recordings. Still, the transmission of this school of singing can be seen as having come to an end (2015:33).

In other words, unlike the generation of Hong Wŏn-gi, *chŏngga* singers from the present generation have forfeited the opportunity to 'fatten' – as Hong Wŏn-gi called it – their music through learning alternative *chŏngga* styles.

In 1980, Hahn Man-young wrote, somewhat optimistically, that:

Since liberation, the mass media has assumed the role of primary music sponsor. By so doing, it has opened the door to the masses. Now, all Koreans can appreciate music that was once the sole property of royalty. Venues where the public can meet and hear music have also multiplied. The correspondence to developments in the west is obvious: the process of Westernization in Korea, our so-called period of modernization, parallels Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment when theatres were built in which music of the court and church could become more publicly available (in English translation, 1990:15-16).

Hahn's prophecy, based on his perceptions of *kugak*-related developments in Korea up to 1980 and referring to *chŏngak* and *aak* (but not folk music) has materialized only partially. Hahn correctly points out a correspondence to developments in the west, except that the development turned out different to what he expected. Modernization has taken place so quickly that musical

culture itself has become westernized rather than developing on its own, leaving genres like *chŏngga* institutionally sidelined – the door may have been opened, but the masses have yet to become aware of the spectacle taking place inside. Sijo in particular, then, nowadays exists both in its institutionalized context, performed, innovated, appreciated and cherished by a relatively small circle of connoisseurs, as well as in the amateur realm where interest has been renewed in recent times as people have rediscovered their heritage in a slightly new configuration. Presumably, none of these scenarios is what Hahn was thinking of when he predicted a public *kugak* scene comparable to Western classical music's moving from the courts of nobility to the realm of the bourgeois salon and venues for the public. In summary, rather than the process by which Western classical music moved into the public realm and through which *kugak* could have undergone the same development, Western musical culture itself has been imported into Korea, usurping this public dimension. Hahn's vision of a parallel between the *kugak* of today and the Western classical music of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century has, as a result, not been realised. *Kugak* jumped the middle phase during which Western classical music found a broad base in the bourgeoisie, and instead reached a more advanced stage of institutionalization and state funding that has parallels in the Western classical music world of today, where much activity, particularly in Europe, likewise relies on state funding.

With regard to the preservation system, it appears that, all things considered, the changes in performance practice wrought on *chŏngga* are comparably insignificant, with most changes owed to the same degree to broader social and cultural change. Whatever negative impact there may have been, seems to be outweighed by the threat of extinction that *chŏngga* faced without the sponsorship granted by the preservation system. The biggest change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then, was the institutionalization of *chŏngga*, which changed its dynamic in the same way as other *kugak* genres: *chŏngga* is not catering primarily to the audiences any more, but responds to input at the institutional level.

In the following excerpt from a recent paper on sijo, Moon Hyun specifically warns about an impoverishment of the sijo tradition, taking stock of the current state of affairs in the *chōngga* and especially sijo world:

In contrast to *kagok* and *kaśa*, sijo, then, is wrongly considered to be easy even by professionals, so that especially in the case of *kyōngje* sijo [Kyōnggi Province sijo, the style prevailing in Seoul and the institutions] the repertoire sung in schools, transmission teaching and even concert halls is limited to just a few types of sijo, amounting to not more than *p'yōng* and *śasōl* sijo. In addition, the recent trend in the *kugak* world to promote fusion and hybrid-related fads leads to disregard and dismissal of *chōngga* as boring music by the *kugak* world, not to speak of the general public. *Chōngga* have to struggle to survive some way or other, which makes it harder to insist on *chōngga* recitals that feature the genuine tradition. Of course, it is one of the characteristics of intangible cultural heritage, and entirely natural, that the arts and culture of an era should change according to the cultural environment. Still, it is nothing short of disappointing that in our country the conditions implemented around what is a proper traditional cultural art are always gauged on shallow commercial considerations first (2015:61-2).

As a researcher of *chōngga*, it is not easy to take an objective stance. Clearly, *chōngga* fared better than the extinction that it would have faced without sponsorship, but worse than someone like Moon Hyun thinks necessary. Yet, Moon is not arguing in favour of changing *chōngga* to make it more popular (as is evidenced by his negative evaluation of *sōgamje* sijo), but quite the opposite: he criticizes government institutions in their perceived course of favouring the popular over the traditional, and almost criticizes the general public for not caring more about *chōngga*. While many strands of regional sijo lead a precarious existence, it is hard to see how this can be amended through policy, short of a massive investment to create national properties for sijo, which to many would seem a disproportionate financial expenditure that would, in turn, necessitate a range of other appointments to balance the scales among various additional performance arts.

To advocate an expansion of the preservation system is to misread the writing on the wall when the tendency is to cut funding for culture and the arts, as ways of ‘sustainable preservation’

are discussed to save performance traditions from not only globalization, but also such policies, and of what seems to be a consensus on the opposite approach of decreasing reliance on financial injections. Indeed, in the neoliberal world order, the call for music to fend for itself in the marketplace has become something of a golden calf. In commercial terms, *chŏngga* during the Chosŏn dynasty occupied a middle ground between state-sponsored *aak* ritual music and folk music genres that were either commercially viable (like *p'anson*) or part of participatory popular culture not meant to be commercial (like *p'ungmul*).<sup>2</sup> *Kagŏk* and *kisaeng* made a living off *chŏngga*, but literati played for their own enjoyment. It is clear, however, that *chŏngga* was always the music of a minority, so a world in which, as Hahn Man-young put it, “mass media assumes the role of primary music sponsor” of a genre like *chŏngga* would be unprecedented, and accordingly unlikely, if not, in a certain sense, inadequate. Given that *chŏngga* was never meant to have broad appeal, it appears likely that it will still vanish if left to its own devices. I have doubts that any such musical genre can be made ‘sustainable’.<sup>3</sup>

Here, I want to draw on Richard Wagner: *Lohengrin*, *The Valkyrie*, *The Flying Dutchman*, and *The Rhinegold* are the Wagner operas listed in the programme of the 2016/17 and 2017/18 seasons of Hamburg State Opera in my hometown. Each is vastly more popular than *chŏngga*, but nevertheless every audience seat in every single performance of these or any other piece performed at Hamburg State Opera is subsidized to the tune of around €100 by the city’s senate, with similar figures applying to theatre and opera performances in other cities. Likewise, Hamburg used tax revenue to sponsor the Elbphilharmonie, a splendid new concert hall, finished in late 2016 after nine years of construction and at a cost of €789 million. Although there is room to criticize the cost explosion and the somewhat flashy and elitist aspects of the project, these examples show that even in our current neoliberal climate, subsidies for culture and the arts are a question of priorities. According to the German Federal Statistical Office, €3.5 billion was spent

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<sup>2</sup> Moon Hyun pointed out that *kagŏk* used to be sung in aristocratic circles, but not by court musicians during the Chosŏn dynasty (personal communication at the National Gugak Center, 15 August 2015).

<sup>3</sup> The scholars who discuss ways of ‘sustainable preservation’, of course, do not usually have the power to shape cultural policy themselves, but with their efforts try to pick up the pieces that result from such policy.

in 2013 on public theatre and music institutions.<sup>4</sup> If we remember that Howard cited the National Gugak Center as the largest recipient of arts funding in Korea and specified a figure of \$48 million for 2014, this suddenly does not seem like such a disproportionate amount. Accordingly, in the Korean case, too, preservation must not necessarily be seen as a breeding phase before performance arts are released “into the wild” to fight for survival, and either float or sink. If we also remember Howard’s questionnaire which gauged public perception of the importance of *kugak* in Korea, I see no evidence that the public fundamentally disagrees with the allocation of funds for supporting traditional arts. It is my hope that with regard to arts funding, at least, Korea will align itself with various European countries rather than the United States.

Cultural heritage, together with education, is too important to be subject to cost-cutting or made into merely a commercial enterprise. In one of his ‘Critical Models’, Adorno also refers to Wagner when he writes the following:

Recall the most famous formulation of German collective narcissism which was Wagner’s: to be German means to do something for its own sake. The self-righteousness of this sentence is undeniable, as is the imperialistic overtone which contrasts the pure will of the Germans with a supposed petty mercantilism, that of the Anglo-Saxons in particular. Still it remains correct that the exchange relation, i.e., the permeation of all spheres, even that of spirit [Geist], by the commodity form – a phenomenon popularly described as commercialization – had not flourished in Germany in the late 18th and in the 19th century to the extent that it had in the more advanced capitalist countries. This lent some power of resistance at least to intellectual [geistigen] production. It was understood as an In-itself [ein An sich], not merely a For-something-other and For-others [ein Für anderes und Für andere], nor as an object of exchange. The model of intellectual production was not that of the entrepreneur acting according to the laws of the market but rather that of the civil servant fulfilling his duty to his superiors; this has often been emphasized in Kant (1985:122-3, English translation by Thomas Y. Levin).

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<sup>4</sup> Published in the 2016 report on music (*Bildung und Kultur: Spartenbericht Musik*): [http://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Kultur/SpartenberichtMusik5216203169004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Kultur/SpartenberichtMusik5216203169004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) [accessed 3 August 2017].

The popularization of *chŏngga* cannot be the task of academia, but, returning to Moon Hyun's indictment above, we can try to understand why *chŏngga* are not more popular. We live in times in which the appetite for and supply of entertainment is endless, but patience to invest in the building of an appreciation towards things not readily accessible is low, not least in the contemporary efficiency-oriented South Korea with its *ppalli ppalli* ('quick, quick') culture. I know no young Koreans who, other than those who are *kugak* majors, are interested in *chŏngga* as a hobby. The Korean educational environment undeniably plays a part in this: a middle or high school student, who spends the better part of his day in *bagwŏn* private educational institutes, has, for the most part, neither time to practise *chŏngga* for fun, nor, indeed, time to wonder if practising *chŏngga* for fun might be something to enjoy.

If, as Moon Hyun holds, the majority of contemporary Koreans do, in fact, think that *chŏngga* are boring, we can wonder under what circumstances such an attitude could shift in the future. *Chŏngga* may have suffered from the wholesale dismissal of the elite culture of Chosŏn times. Many Koreans still hold negative views about such elite culture as having been stagnant and formulaic, part of a corrupt and elitist system reflective of the cultural backwardness that is seen to have resulted in Japanese annexation. Still, as long as amateurs do not run out of time and patience to learn *sijo*, and funding for *chŏngga* in the institutional realm does not dry up, there is always the possibility of *chŏngga* taking up a more central role in performance culture again, possibly as a backlash against globalization and the renewed interest that such can bring for an engagement of Koreans with their own traditions. On the other hand, *chŏngga's* rather unapproachable aesthetic, as unfamiliar to modern Koreans as it is to a Western audience, makes *chŏngga* not the most likely candidate to experience a revival on a greater scale.

In this thesis, I have endeavoured to discuss the ways academic writings on Korean music have conceptualized aesthetics, in general and specific terms. A problem common to academic writing on something as dynamic and in such a state of flux as a musical tradition has become

evident: only the most general terms are widely agreed upon, whereas most scholars do their own thing in discussing the specifics. In other words, Korean aesthetic terminology is far from standardized and not all the terms that are discussed will be acknowledged as valid by all musicians or scholars. While most of the general concepts I have discussed will be familiar to anyone specializing in the Korean tradition, the specifics have included a number of concepts of more recent coinage, which have not been accessible in English-language publications. Many of the writings surveyed make the implicit assumption that the academic discussion and the resulting discourse on aesthetics serves the purpose of establishing a ‘proper’ interpretation so that music may be executed accordingly in performance, and, to a lesser degree, also the purpose of establishing a ‘proper’ way of listening to the music: what a listener should look out for and what it is about the music that has aesthetic value. As a legacy of its Confucian heritage, Korean scholarship is often conservative in outlook, valuing the traditional and well-tried, so the aesthetic view is mostly justified with reference to tradition. A pre-modern – and therefore contemporaneous – discussion of aesthetics in Korean music has been nowhere near as vibrant, nor deemed as important as it is nowadays, and academic debate in the way it is understood is a very recent phenomenon, not to speak only of the field of Korean music. For the case of *sijo*, Kim Young-Uk frankly admits this:

The music theory of the Chosŏn dynasty generally lacks a tradition of close analysis, so there is not much systematic material to refer to in order to analyse *sijo-ch’ang* which has a way of pitch movement and rhythm completely different from Western music (2013:203).

This poses some difficult questions about the relationship between musicians, performance practice, aesthetic and philosophical concepts in Chosŏn times, the natural habitat of *chŏngga*. Similar to what Edward Ho pointed out, we are left to wonder whether musicians had explicit aesthetic ideals in mind when they created their music, whether the music was the result of an explicit aesthetic sensibility that subconsciously preferred certain expressions over others as the

result of internalizing certain values, or even whether the music was at some point reshaped to adhere to certain aesthetic standards (as Hwang JunYon documented was the case of the *kagok* repertoire). Even if the idea it refers to has precedent, a concept like *hwaibudong* can be seen as an ‘emerging concept’, and, unless some documentation for pre-modern usage of this term with reference to *chōngak* is discovered, we could negatively call it a ‘new construct’ or an anachronism. The point of research on such matters is not to prove or refute ideas, but show where they come from, for theoretical and comparative use as a case study of how aesthetic concepts are appropriated, form and take hold, and for practical use as the basis of individual aesthetic judgment and performance decisions. Whether a concept – coined by a scholar or a performer – has precedent may be a problem for academics, but is less so for performers and audiences, unless we are chasing the spectre of authenticity (which is much-discussed in the context of Western historical performance practice). In the present case, we can likewise conclude that the quest for finding the “original consciousness” is but one among many possible approaches to the performance of music, all of which together constitute “the interpretive freedom, the creativity, which performers and audiences both value, but which our perversely conflicted language for performance does not allow us openly to articulate” (Cook 2000:98). For a performer to approach music from a contemporary vantage point and to formulate concepts without precedent is as valid a way as any other in a vibrant musical environment in which museification of a repertoire is undesired. *Hwaibudong* is, in this sense, an uncontroversial concept with strong claims to Confucian sanction, being the reported words of Confucius himself. But the same interpretive freedom is desirable even for concepts that run counter to Confucian ideas of cherishing the tried and traditional. Howard (2016) has written on the institutionalized world of contemporary *kugak* being limited in not having to prove itself in the marketplace. To a certain degree *kugak* misses out on chances to re-invent itself within the framework of the preferences of a discerning audience. As things stand, *kugak*’s loyalties do not lie with the listener, but, in an ideal world, it would be up to audiences to decide how they like their *chōngga*.



My comparison of written and oral sources reveals no fundamental differences in the ways aesthetics in *chŏngga* and *sijo* are addressed. Unsurprisingly, singers rank those repertoires highest that are their favourites, or that they specialize in. The singers' answers to my questioning reflect that they have considered aesthetic questions, but have mostly not come to conclusions that differ radically from the established discourse. Traditional views can be seen to have retained currency, hence Pak Mun-gyu's references to dynamics closely resemble Lee Hye-ku's conceptualizations, while Moon Hyun's reference to *chŏngga* as a tool of self-cultivation is reminiscent of Hwang JunYon's published articles. Not least for performers who want to engage creatively with *chŏngga* and create fusions or new adaptations, coming to solid conclusions about *chŏngga*'s aesthetic is of fundamental importance, since only when a singer has explored how the aesthetic essence of his music is codified, can he create something with the same aesthetic, instead of just adapting musical parameters.

Finally, as I conclude, I would like to offer my own personal take on *sijo*. I consider that *hŭng* is not a concept that describes *chŏngga* well. Instead, *hŭng* to me is perfectly apparent in a performance of Korean percussion music or *sinawi*, and captures a state of flow in which the body, of performer and listener alike, almost goes into trance, due to the sheer volume, the *bobŭp* breathing cycles, but also the rhythms which, to use Howard's comment on a *samulnori* performance in front of my university, SOAS, "tend to hit you directly into the oldest part of the brain". If the term *hŭng* needs to be applied to *chŏngga*, it seems as though it would be a very different kind of *hŭng*. In Helen Myers' 1992 edited volume introducing ethnomusicology, a contribution by John Blacking discusses the biology of music and explores, among other things, the relationship between musical activity and human physiology, and how emotional states can be generated through musical expression. I believe that there may be much yet to unearth about *chŏngga* in this regard. The human voice is the most immediate instrument in existence: I can smile as I play a funeral march on the piano, but I cannot convincingly sing a sad song without feeling

a little sad as I sing it. In a class in 2013, my Korean language tutor, the notable translator Lee Heejae, told me that to him one of the most important Confucian ideas was the belief that etiquette, that is behaviour, could influence a person's character; in other words, that the outside changes what is on the inside. I am not familiar enough with the Classics to quotation a passage to this effect, but this seems not dissimilar to John Blacking's more scientifically-minded findings. Accordingly, it is impossible to sing *sijo* without a sense of *susinje*, cleansing. If this sounds too esoteric, a more rational way to put it is that *sijo*, and *chŏngga* in general, may have, through their characteristics, including but not limited to their slowness, the physiological effect of calming singer and listener, slowing one's pulse, and so on. At the physiological level, the long drawn-out sounds may have an effect similar to that of Buddhist chanting. The singer's attention is focused and directed towards his own bodily response, resulting in the absorbed state that every meditation or self-hypnosis technique aims for. This physiological observation may seem too technical and rational a description for a musical aesthetic and it is but one way to look at *sijo* and *chŏngga*. There is, then, nothing I fundamentally disagree with in the descriptions of *chŏngga* that I have presented. Still, if I had to take my pick, I would say that the three ideas that to me describe *sijo*'s aesthetic best are, first, Lee Hye-ku's Daoist-inspired nature comparison of *sijo* with the gradation of the wind passing through branches. This conceptualization helps the Western listener to let go of his/her expectation of rhythmic pulse, based, as Lee Hye-ku notes (in an essay on the aesthetic of the court music piece *Sujech'ŏn* (1983)), on the strict rhythm of the human pulse, whereas he suggests that to think of the irregular rhythm in Korean *aak* and *chŏngak* as based on the human breath would be better.

Second, Donna Kwon's proposal to locate *sijo*'s aesthetic in the tension and release created through *sijo*'s ornamentation likewise provides an entry point. My favourite example of this would be a *sijo* performance in a 2011 video<sup>5</sup> in which Kim Tongik (b.~1930), holder for the Sŏsan-style puppet play (South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province Property No.26) sings the *sijo* *Chŏngsalli* in the *naep'ŏje* style of Yi Mun-gyo. There is no stage, no traditional clothes and no instrument.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbYTLF90eUg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbYTLF90eUg)

Without any pomp whatsoever, we see just a master of the tradition who even neglects the common stage etiquette of a motionless posture and gaze; his voice that of an old man, *sijo* at its most simple. At the same time, the fundamental basic aesthetic of *sijo*'s dynamic is exemplified and the video exudes the austere charm of the scholar of old singing songs in rustic retirement.

Finally, Pak Sök's linking of the Daoist concept *taegyoyakchol*, 'refined plainness', or, as I would like to paraphrase it, 'rehearsed simplicity', appeals as a way to think about *sijo* that reconciles *sijo*'s simplicity with the views of those singers who want to challenge its status as the 'younger cousin' of *kagok* and *kasa*. By way of comparison, I once saw a recording of the famous Croatian pianist Ivo Pogorelich finishing a concert consisting of repertoire by Bach, Scarlatti and Beethoven with Beethoven's 'Für Elise', which we have become used to as piano beginner's fare and cell phone ringtone. Unexpectedly, though, it sounded very crisp and fresh, in an effect similar to the rehearsed simplicity of an accomplished *chōngga* singer performing *sijo*.

All in all, the effect that hearing *sijo* has on me has not fundamentally changed from and still entails the same fascination as when I first heard it in 2011. I hope that *sijo* will continue to be transmitted for a long time, so others can experience and share in my fascination. As Lee Hye-ku, the "father of Korean musicology" put it: "*Sijo* is truly the music of scholars" (1983: 162).

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## Appendix

漢城分番

原籍平安南道平壤府  
現住京城府清進洞九

【申綾波】  
(二十七歳)



技藝

歌  
羽調、  
歌詞、  
西道俚謠

(特) 女 琴、墨 畫 隸 書

原籍京畿道高陽郡崇仁面  
現住京城府河進洞二五八

【金김珊산瑚호珠주】(十九歲)



技藝

西道俚曲、國語

四

爾看他萬紫千紅，  
波的不流難。  
淡的不流難，  
長的不踈難，  
短的不踈難，  
爾的容態，  
曲不流，  
淡不流，  
長不踈，  
短不踈，  
十無一不宜，  
最是衆芳無  
顧處，  
善於畫，  
尤絕，  
이라

고침창망가이인다. 정든물이 흥  
용되어 춤섹개흔이니 몸이, 동스  
쳐서지함엔네. 락문간을타라  
져, 봉구 향곡이헛스미, 위부리  
짜라날자. 예서향구힐췌스미, 오  
도자의제스된가. 그림광부흥  
스미, 공부랑을써타돌가, 가사  
조평양스미, 갓초스스원후에,  
향물고글췌가난디. 화신놀이  
물불이, 화부놀이십년이, 한이  
로다사치불네. 다동조합십년만  
에, 한성전반불네 오니, 이십칠세  
삼경이라. 얼골기름슈유타고, 성  
필안한술키로다


雪蘭玉容渾身白如雪十分是真珠  
兒○溜○口○桃○腮○點○絳○紅○是○三○分○是  
珊瑚的○로다自是佳人也多薄命이  
나生得了這樣清楚하고那忍上背  
樓○也○照○盈○所○抱○欲○無○라所以紉  
屬이長在手로다

한성전반까지 가서, 여보시오 못  
는 말이, 여화여월맹기춤에, 성장은  
서울이오, 땅은은싱구세오, 인  
본말도덕강하고, 덕정오년삼월  
부터, 기성조항들이고, 작년팔  
월이리로온, 김산호유가누구요  
단장소복은이미, 서판잡가이  
기다가, 신성록유문을열고, 감안  
々々나오는데, 선부회용그러흔  
듯, 추파와안여이부미, 키는술키  
누구니, [redacted]인회교판장, 교

Illustration 5.1: Two profiles from the *Chosŏn miin pogam*, published in 1918 (p.42)

# 1어 간들 어더리

날 선비들은 시조시에 가락을 얹어 노래를 부르며 느림의 맛을 즐겼답니다.  
간에 쫓기며 바쁘게 사는 우리도 때론 느린 음악을 들으며  
넉한 마음을 갖는 것도 필요하겠지요?

시조 '태산이'의 초창을 들으며, 곡의 분위기와 장단의 한배를 느껴 봅시다.  III 1

단의 한배  
배란 본래 '활'을 쏘아 떨어뜨린 거  
'라는 뜻으로, 국악에서는 장단의 빠  
고 느린 정도를 뜻합니다.

시조시 '태산이' 양사언 지음

초창 태산이 높다 하되 하늘 아래 뉘이로다

중창 오르고 또 오르면 못 오를 리 없건마는


중창 시람이 채 아니 오르고 되만 높다 (하더라)

시조창의 5박 장단과 8박 장단을 손장단으로 익혀 봅시다.

\* 5박 장단(⊗: 왼손의 검지손가락 짚기)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
① (덩)	⊗ (징고)	1 (덕)	○ (릉)	1 (덕)	다섯	둘	셋		
손으로 무릎을 치고 왼손으로 시 감세를 표현합니다.	왼손 검지손가락으 로 무릎을 살짝 짚 습니다.	오른손으로 무릎을 치고 왼손으로 시 감세를 표현합니 다.	왼손으로 무릎을 짚니다.	오른손으로 무릎을 짚 후 양 손을 실 짝 듭니다.					

조는 5박과 8박 장단을 섞어 짚니다.  
박 장단의 경우에는 제4박까지는 5박 장단과 같고, 제6박에 '릉', 제7박에 '덕', 제8박에 '궁'을 짚니다.

을명으로 초창을 익혀 보고, 기본 선율이 익숙해지면 시감세를 살려 가사로 따라 불러 봅시다.  III 2-3

**미무리** 일상생활의 모습을 솔직하고 재미있게 시조시로 지어 보고, 시조 노래해 봅시다.

**보기** 이들은 시조창을 들어 보고 불러 보세  
조신의 선비들이 가락선에 얹은 시조  
장단과 시감새 살려 불러 보면 (어떨까)

마음의 여유를 갖고  
중집게 '사'와 '중' 어는  
살의 지혜와 맛을  
풍류'라고 해요.



## 시조 '태산이' 중 초창

①	⊗	1	○	1
仲 仲 -			仲 黃 -	
태 사 -		니 이		

\* [仲] 黃 [황]

중 황

①	⊗	1	○	⊗	○	1
黃 仲 -			仲			仲
높 다 -			하			되

중 황

①	⊗	1	○	⊗	○	1
仲 仲 -			- -	黃	- -	仲
하 니 -			- -	리	- -	아

중 황

①	⊗	1	○	1
黃 仲 -			仲 黃 -	
되 이 -			로 오 -	

중 황

①	⊗	1	○	⊗	○	1
仲						
다					△	

중 황

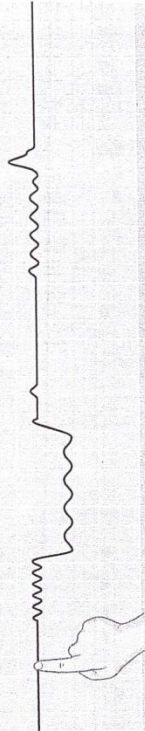
Illustration 5.2: Sijo lesson in a Korean sixth-year elementary school music textbook, featuring the sijo *T'aesani* in *chōngganbo*, and including explanations on knee *changdan* (Cho Hyoim 2010:52-3).



## 동창이

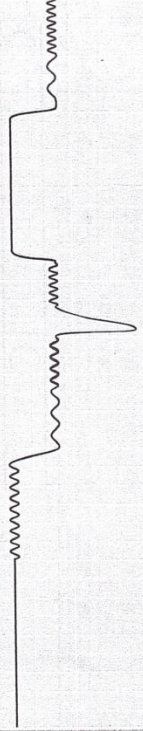
평시조 | 남구만 작시 | 국립국악원 편보

임(林)	중(仲)	황(黃)	임(林)	가사
○	○	○	○	동창



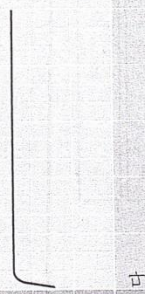
나
○

임(林)	중(仲)	황(黃)	임(林)	중(仲)	가사
○	○	○	○	○	노고



진
○

임(林)	중(仲)	황(黃)	임(林)	가사
○	○	○	○	다




다
○

시조는 시조시에 가락을 엮은 형태입니다. '솔, 도, 레'의 3음으로 구성되어 있으며, 1박 이 대략 2초 정도로 속도가 느린 음악입니다. 우리 선조의 높은 정신 세계를 표현하고 있습니다.

## 함께 배워요!

- 1 일정한 박을 치면서 말 붙임새를 익혀 봅시다.
- 2 시조의 초장을 듣고, 시김새를 살려 따라 불러 봅시다.
- 3 시조의 특징에 대하여 이야기해 봅시다.




**하나 데!**

가곡 초수대엽 '동창이'를 감상하고, 시조와 가곡의 특징을 비교해 봅시다.


### 시조 '동창이' 초장

국립국악원 편보



동창 - - 이

밝았 - - 나



노고 - - 지 리 -

우 지 - 진 다 -

Illustration 5.3: Sijo lesson in a Korean sixth-year elementary school music textbook, featuring the sijo *Tongch'angi*, based on a notation style called *karaksŏn akpo* (melodic line notation) reminiscent of Chong Kyŏngt'ae's earlier graphic notations for amateur sijo singers.



## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my immense gratitude for the support, encouragement and practical help from a range of people and institutions. I owe the greatest debt to Professor Keith Howard for seeing me through this project from the start to the finish line. He shared generously his wealth of knowledge and experience, not only with regard to the field of study, but also the technical side of academic life. I am grateful for his good spirit, constant encouragement, and his practical attitude and tolerance towards diverse approaches, views and working styles. Despite my occasional misgivings about my research, nine out of ten times that I walked into his office, I came out an hour later with newfound confidence and determination. This thesis, then, was possible only thanks to him. Yoo Kyoung-eun deserves credit for, in a critical time of my research, making suggestions on how to organize my research interviews, going through my interview questions with me, and helping me with contacting scholars and performers. I cherish the stimulating discussions on Korean literature I had with Dr. Grace Koh and recall fondly her translation class in my first year of PhD study. The successful completion of that year was possible thanks to Lee Heejae and Ulala Higuchi. At the Academy of Korean Studies, I want to thank Professor Sheen Dae-Cheol, Professor Sung Ki-Ryun, Professor Kim Hyeon, and the students of the music department. Thanks also to Chihiro Yoshida for her constant encouragement and support. Moon Hyun, Yi Sŏngyun, Pak Mun-gyu, Yeh Chan-kun and Kim Yŏnggi dedicated their time to my interviews and made a substantial contribution to my research. I want to express my gratitude to Professor Cho Kyu-Ick for his support and to Yi Pohyŏng for patiently answering my queries. Donna Kwon and Kim Minjŏng kindly made available their research to me. Cheong Moon-kyu, President of Synnara Records, generously provided splendid recordings of top-level singers.

Sincere thanks are due to the Korea Foundation, The Academy of Korean Studies, the British Association of Korean Studies and SOAS for funding my research. The Centre of Korean Studies at SOAS provided the opportunity to present part of my research at the 12<sup>th</sup> Worldwide Consortium of Korean Studies Center Workshop.

Several Korean friends went through my interview transcriptions with a scrutinizing ear, supplying missing words, correcting misunderstood expressions, and providing useful comments. For this, I am deeply indebted to Kim Ji Young and Jeon Ahum; as well as to Yun Jihoe for this and much more. As always, my family has supported me, tried to understand what I am doing, and helped me to occasionally forget about thesis writing.